

# AC REVIEW OF BOOKS

Vol. 1 No. 2

**The Poetry and Music of Science**

**Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West**

**The World Philosophy Made**



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# CONTENTS

Editorial i

## INTERVIEWS

*The Poetry and Music of Science: Interview with Professor Tom McLeish* 1

## REVIEW ESSAYS

Review of *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* by Michelle Delaney  
Professor Christopher Conway 6

## REVIEWS

Review of *The World Philosophy Made: From Plato to the Digital Age* by Scott Soames  
Professor Justin Skirry 12

Review of *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* by Gayatri Gopinath  
Sohel Sarkar 14

Review of *Females* by Andrea Long Chu  
James Lawrence Slattery 17

Review of *The Face on Film* by Noa Steimatsky  
Dr Kierran Horner 20

Review of *The Sublimity of Document: Cinema as Diorama* edited by Scott McDonald  
Julia Stolyar 22

Review of <i>The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games</i> by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas <b>Jade Hinchliffe</b>	24
Review of <i>Material and Mind</i> by Christopher Bardt <b>Elin Ivansson</b>	27
Review of <i>Evolutionary Causation: Biological and Philosophical Reflections</i> edited by Tobias Uller and Kevin N. Laland. <b>Jag Williams</b>	29
Review of <i>The SCOPUS Diaries and the (il)logics of Academic Survival</i> by Abel Polese <b>Professor Henrique Schneider</b>	33
Contributor Information	35

# EDITORIAL

This second issue of *AC Review of Books* emerges into a very different landscape from the first.

In the UK, where I am writing from, Covid-19 remains a serious concern. Families continue to lose loved ones to this terrible virus, and as we learn more about it we are beginning to understand some of the longer term health consequences for those that do survive serious infection. Many more people, perhaps spared these worst of outcomes, struggle in precarious circumstances exacerbated by an uncertain future. As a global community, the need for togetherness and co-operation is starker than it has been for generations.

This is a poignant time, then, for us to contemplate our shared humanity and our duty to uphold the highest standards of civilisation. I refer here not only to the urgent need to support the most vulnerable in communities around the world, but also to the necessary and important work being done by protesters in response to ongoing legacies of racial prejudice and social injustice. Legacies that were foregrounded so sharply in the appalling murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis on 25th May.

Confronting and addressing the racist cultures and systems of oppression that give rise to such atrocities is a necessity that is long past due. *AC Review of Books* stands in solidarity with those fighting to bring the change.

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This issue begins with an interview with Professor Tom McLeish, Professor of Natural Philosophy in the Physics department at the University of York. Professor McLeish's latest book, *The Poetry and Music of Science*, sets out to challenge the idea that science and creativity occupy separate realms. Bringing together pairings of scientists and artists throughout history, McLeish's book demonstrates the ways the sciences, like the arts, are bound up in creative processes. In this interview, McLeish discusses the experiences that led him to write this book, and his growing understanding of the relationship between the sciences and the

humanities.

Next, we are delighted to include a review essay from Professor Christopher Conway (University of Texas at Arlington) discussing *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* by Michelle Delaney. In this piece, Conway introduces the significance of Buffalo Bill to the history and mythology of the American West, and positions Delaney's book as a significant contribution, not only to the field of Cody studies, but also to the broader study of nineteenth and early twentieth century American visual culture.

Professor Justin Skirry (Nebraska Wesleyan University) then reviews *The World Philosophy Made: From Plato to the Digital Age* by Scott Soames. Skirry finds value in this work as an introduction to analytic philosophy, its canonical thinkers, and the contributions it has made to a number of scientific fields, but finds it limited by a "conservative, Anglo-American understanding of philosophy and its relation to the world at large".

Sohel Sarkar's review of *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* by Gayatri Gopinath highlights the vastness and nuance of Gopinath's curatorial project, which proposes nothing less than "a revised understanding of queer diaspora" and "establishes the ways...critical regionalism can interrupt...binary distinctions". The scope of this work, Sarkar argues, marks a significant contribution to queer studies, affect studies, and area studies.

In their review of *Females* by Andrea Long Chu, James Lawrence Slattery (University of Manchester) foregrounds the elusiveness and playful unknowability of the text - an extended meditation on the provocative statement: 'Everyone is female. And everyone hates it'. This is a reflective piece that expresses something of the friction between detached critical analysis and meeting a resistant text on its own terms.

Next, Dr Kierran Horner (King's College London) reviews Noa Steimatsky's *The Face on Film*. Horner is intrigued by Steimatsky's notion of the face "as Janusian nexus of multiple motions", and finds her analyses of faces across the history of film invigorating. He is, however, critical of the relative absence of female filmmakers in Steimatsky's archive.

Julia Stolyar (SOAS) then reviews Scott McDonald's *The Sublimity of Document: Cinema as Diorama*. Stolyar is impressed by this wide-ranging collection of interviews with filmmakers from around the world, praising the multiperspectival insights it offers into the "emotional, practical, and creative elements of documentary filmmaking".

This is followed by Jade Hinchliffe's (University of Huddersfield) review of *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games* by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas. Hinchliffe praises this fascinating and timely book for its incisive examination of the portrayal and

popular reception of characters of colour in mainstream fantasy narratives, emphasising its potential to challenge the narrowness and, often, negativity, surrounding these representations.

In her review of Christopher Bardt's *Material and Mind* - a text that sets out to explore the way "working with materials influences our imagination", Elin Ivansson (Sheffield Hallam) commends Bardt's interdisciplinary approach to proving his thesis, and the vibrant mix of historical and contemporary examples he deploys.

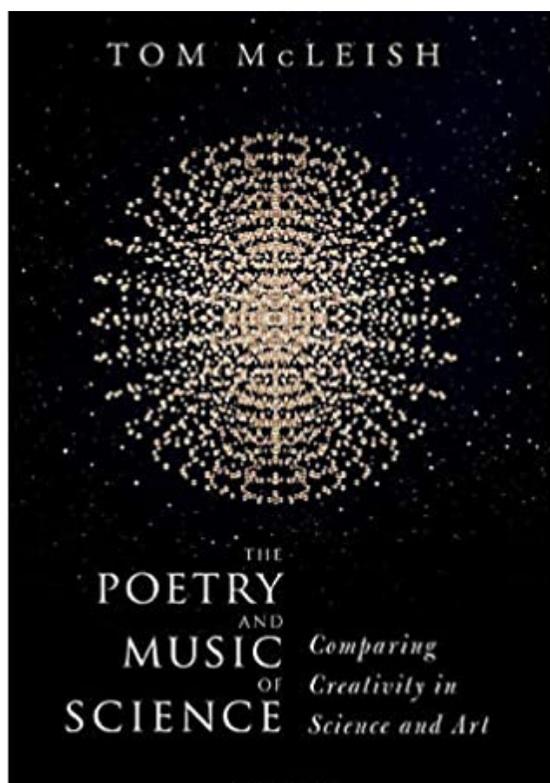
Jag Williams' (University of Edinburgh) review of *Evolutionary Causation: Biological and Philosophical Reflections* introduces the key concepts and context of this text for a lay audience before zooming in on some of the individual contributions. The collected essays in this volume are based on the fundamental idea that, "evolutionary theories must go beyond gene-centered accounts...by introducing concepts from evolutionary developmental biology and evolutionary ecology". Williams is fascinated by the revisionist position these collected essays proceed from, though he laments the lack of engagement with more moderate traditional evolutionary biologists and philosophers.

Finally, Professor Henrique Schneider (Nordakademie) finds in Abel Polese's *The SCOPUS Diaries and the (il)logics of Academic Survival*, an invaluable guide to the key areas of academic life, offering "strategies and practical counsel for early-career scholars" in an accessible format.

VICTORIA ADDIS

# The Poetry and Music of Science

Interview with Professor Tom McLeish



Tom McLeish is Professor of Natural Philosophy in the department of Physics at the University of York. He has a background in theoretical physics, and made his name through contributions to the understanding of soft matter and its properties. His recent work has zoomed out to focus on the humanistic aspects of science. His 2014 book, *Faith and Wisdom in Science*, examines the role of theology in scientific pursuits, and his latest work, *The Poetry and Music of Science*, which is the subject of this interview, tackles creativity and imagination in the sciences.

In what follows, McLeish discusses his approach to the topic of scientific creativity and his reasons for setting out to write this book in the first place. He shares the story behind some of the examples he

uses in the book and provides insight into his understanding of the historical sorting of human knowledge into distinct disciplines, and the utility and limitations of such sorting.

**Your background is in Physics. How did you come to start thinking about the role of creativity in the scientific process and why do you think recognising this creativity is so important?**

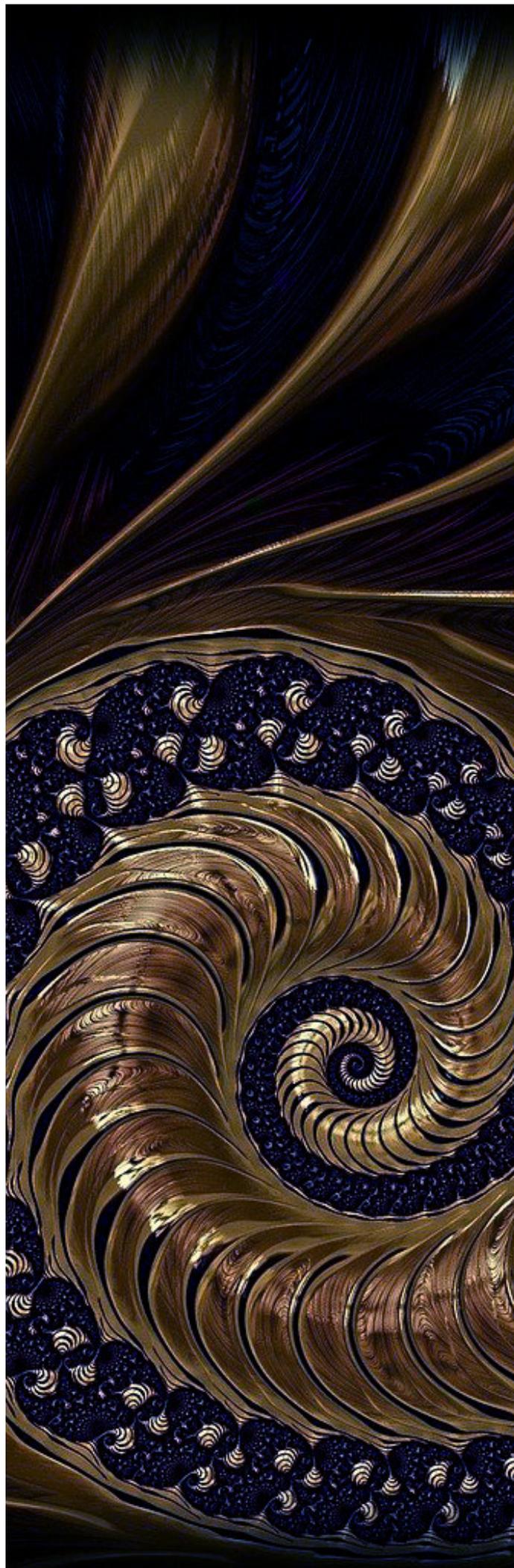
It really came from a collision of experiences. Over the years working as a scientist, collaborating with others both in my own teams and in other places over the world, I became really interested in where scientific ideas came from, and began to notice that the most interesting and influential ideas came from those people who dreamed up the most imaginative questions, and had the most radical way of perceiving how nature might be behaving (in my case in the world of complex molecules in fluids). The collision came with my experiences visiting high schools, which I love to do, to introduce pupils to the sorts of new thinking that is emerging in the subjects they are studying (I also do a 'road show' for schools on such perennials as science and faith). There I found that some of the brightest pupils who had chosen to drop science subjects had done so because they found in them 'no place for my own creativity', or 'no imagination'. Yet I knew that without these things science cannot progress at all. I felt that the role of the creative imagination in science needed to be explored and spelled out. It also appealed to my longer project of re-envisioning the sciences as types of 'humanities' rather than

an entirely different academic world. **Your previous book, *Faith and Wisdom in Science*, is also positioned between the humanities and the sciences. In both books, you are interrogating these boundaries between disciplines that we have come to view as almost natural separations. What is your understanding of how and when these different disciplines started to form?**

I think now that the tendency to divide the disciplinary world goes back a very long way. Human beings like to categorise and file things – and up to a point that is helpful. It is when high barriers and mutual ‘othering’ of the communities that disciplines define starts that they become damaging. So the division of the ‘Seven Liberal Arts’ of late antiquity (Boethius) and the early universities of the European middle ages situated the ‘humanities’ disciplines in the ‘trivium’ of logic, rhetoric and grammar, and the mathematical disciplines in the ‘quadrivium’ of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy and music. However, throughout those centuries of learning, any educated person would have mastered all of these. The current fragmentation of individual learning really set in very late – in the nineteenth century debates of curricula at school, and the rise of science in education.

**Do you think these disciplinary distinctions have served us to some degree historically?**

Well yes up to a point – to focus on a narrow field of knowledge with finite resources of time and material means that one can go further at a first pass. However, in order to be really creative in a single discipline requires the ability to see beyond its current confines: just the ability that is not delivered by a fragmented and focused education. Reading and thinking from other fields can reshape at a fundamental level the way one innovates in one’s own. One reason that Einstein was able to be so imaginative



in his radical transformations of physics in the first decade of the twentieth century, for example (and he was always adamant that in science, imagination was more important than knowledge, calling himself more an ‘artist’), was that he read a lot of philosophy. Rutherford, when at the Cavendish laboratory, always preferred to hire bright students who had no formal training in physics to work with him for PhDs. To take another example, Tony Leggett, who won a physics Nobel prize for his radical work on the fractional quantum hall effect, read classics at Oxford as an undergraduate. One of the distinctive aspects of his work is the way he approached quantum mechanics – very different to how it is taught.

**One of the things that emerges from *The Poetry and Music of Science* is the similarity between the creative process as it manifests in the arts and as it manifests in the sciences. Is this something you expected to find or did your understanding change during your research?**

This was a surprise, but a delightful one. The book that I thought that I would be writing would contain a few chapters on accounts of scientific creativity, then some on artistic creativity, then finally a nice concluding essay chapter on a comparison. Not only would that have been terribly dull (or at least duller than the eventual book), but it proved impossible to write. The evidence and experience just didn’t fall out that way. Instead, as I talked with artists, writers, composers, poets, physicists, mathematicians, biologists, engineers, I heard commonalities that demanded discussion in other categories that all cut across the arts and sciences.

**In the book, you present the idea that creativity exists in three different worlds: the visual, the textual, and the abstract. Could you explain what you mean by these different strands and discuss how thinking about creativity in this way highlights connections between the arts and sciences?**

Yes – these were the ‘modes’ of creativity that I was hearing and reading about, rather than ‘artistic’ or ‘scientific’ modes. So, I was hearing both artists and physicists talking about visualising their work in the imagination before shaping it on paper. I was alerted to the long and fascinating story that entangles experimental method in science with the history of fictional writing (it was my colleague Patricia Waugh, professor of English at Durham, who pointed out to me early in the project that the coincident origin of experimental method and the early English novel was not a coincidence). Finally, I realised that even where there were no pictures, and even no words, there were still spaces for the creative imagination to go to work on the transcendent glories of music and mathematics. So that is the way it fell out for me. There are other ways of cutting the creativity cake – it turns out that there is a (small) community of philosophers thinking about creativity in other ways, for example, but no one divides it across arts and sciences, because there are just too many commonalities.

**The main body of your book approaches these three strands of creativity through different pairings of scientists and artists. How did you go about selecting these pairings? Did you include any personal favourites?**

Well I really just indulged myself – I mean if you are going to write about music of theoretical physics and need examples, you might as well choose your favourite composer or physics, or artist. For one thing I hoped that the writing would draw on some of that extra energy as a result. So Monet – and the luminous but less well known works he painted at Antibes – serves to illustrate how impressionism resonates with the way that a theoretical scientist has to ‘paint’ a picture of nature in the mind. When it comes to composers of course one sets Bach to one side as a one-off, and so many people have written about him. But that done, top of the rest is Robert



Claude Monet, *Cap de Antibes auf das Esterelgebirge*

Schumann whose music I find endlessly fascinating and satisfying – and wonderfully romantic. His glorious concerto piece for a quartet of horns and orchestra had never received a proper analysis, so it was a real privilege for me to work with the musicologist Julian Horton at Durham on that passage. The mathematical notion that I paired with that is a deep theorem that underpins my own research, and has as slow a history of dawning on its multiple realisers as the tonal journey has in resolving in the Schumann Konzertstück, so seemed a good example to explore.

**This is a wide-ranging book drawing on a number of fields and taking in ideas from the ancient world to the modern day. One of my favourite examples of this is in your discussion of visual metaphor, which you explore through our changing understanding of optics. How important is**

**this broad humanistic understanding to your work?**

Oh very important. I hope to write more about this in future, but I have the notion that the choice of optics as the major science from the early middle ages within scientists of the Islamicate, through the high European medieval thinkers Grosseteste, Peckham and Bacon, was highly fortunate in many regards. One was, of course, its readiness to early scientific observation and rudimentary experiment, as well as its embodiment and realisation of Euclid's geometry. So in one example we had the obvious role that mathematics plays in physics, and phenomena like the rainbow which hovered for centuries at just the right level of difficulty – very hard to understand but not impossible. That all came together in the first decade of the fourteenth century in the simultaneous

discovery by al-Farisi of Baghdad and Dietrich of Freiburg of how the geometric optics of raindrops gave rise to the bow. But there is a deeper idea forming all the while here – for thinking about optics suggests other more general ways of thinking about nature. The images formed by lenses, for example, are imperfect little replicas of the world. That suggests that imperfect models of more general kinds might be efficacious in explaining nature. Incidentally, a by-product of all this is that there are strong reasons to reconnect the humanities discipline of the history of science back with science itself. A wonderful collaboration that I am involved with, the Ordered Universe project, is looking again at medieval science with an interdisciplinary team of scholars and scientists. As well as providing new insights into the radical and imaginative thinking of the early thirteenth century, the project has stimulated much new science – we have about ten new papers so far!

**The book closes with a discussion of**

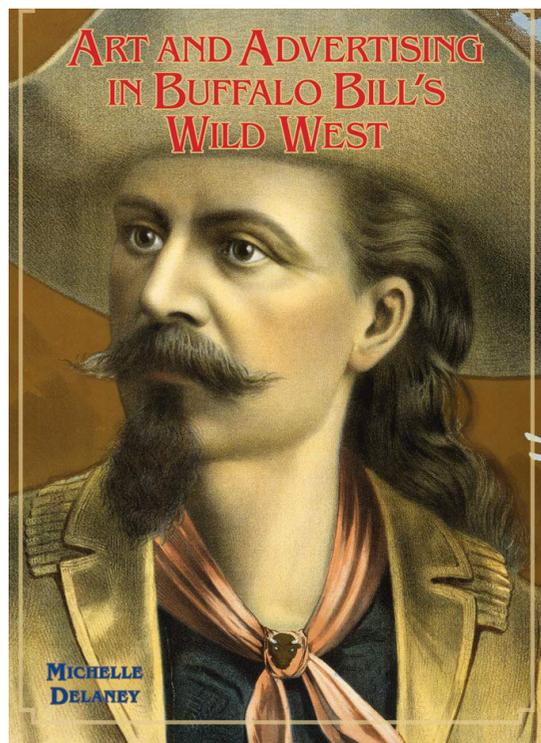


**purpose, which draws on theological and philosophical ideas to think about the bigger picture surrounding science and creativity. How can mobilising these humanistic ideas prompt or complement discussions within/about the sciences?**

I think that this is important in many ways. For one thing it is part of the message that I want to sing out loud that science is not for just geeky experts but like music, which anyone can approach and engage with critically without being a professional, has a role for everyone. I do think that the basket of activities that we now call science springs from the same source deep in our human nature from which music, art and literature also spring. Thinking about the human purpose for science (beyond the obvious instrumental ones) is a longer project that I began in Faith and Wisdom in Science and that I wanted to expand on here. Whether one approaches them from a confessional standpoint or not, theological narratives are powerful ways of articulating purpose and relationship. The relationship of humankind with the natural world is a vital one to keep healthy and mutually fruitful, yet it is in grave danger right now. Science has a clear part to play in navigating that relationship, but the connected web of knowledge and wisdom that comes when we talk across and between our disciplines will be essential in realising our potential to heal and not to hurt.

**If readers could take only one thing away from your book, what would you like that to be?**

That there are other ways of approaching 'science' from the way it is taught at school -science can be contemplative, beautiful, affective, even therapeutic, but also challenging and disruptive in just the same way that poetry, music and art can be. And that we need to find other ways of approaching it that open its doors to the creative imagination that all readers and listeners bring to art.



**Review of *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* by Michelle Delaney.**  
**University of Oklahoma Press. 2019.**  
**235 pp.**

CHRISTOPHER CONWAY

In his influential speech to the 1893 meeting of the American Historical Association, titled “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”, Frederick Jackson Turner observed that although the American frontier line had effectively disappeared by 1890, its conquest by enterprising explorers and pioneers had been central to the construction of a specifically American identity. “In the crucible of the frontier” he declared, “the immigrants were Americanized, liberated, and fused into a mixed race, English in neither nationality or characteristics”. Although Turner did not mention Buffalo Bill by name, he could have. In his speech he observes that the frontier takes the white man and Americanizes him by dressing him like an “Indian” and transforming him into a fearsome warrior. These words described the mythical archetype of the woodsman and army scout, which Buffalo Bill epitomized. In a peculiar but

revealing historical coincidence, while Turner spoke at the American Historical Association meeting, Chicago was hosting its Columbian Exposition, which featured performances of Buffalo Bill’s Wild West, a large outdoors show that memorialized and mythologized the frontier through exotic pageantry, historical reenactments, and various rodeo entertainments. Thanks to his Wild West show and his ubiquity in dime novels, William Frederick “Buffalo Bill” Cody was arguably the most iconic U.S. celebrity of his time, while his European tours (1887-1892, 1902-1906) ensured his enduring international popularity through foreign language serialized literature and comics, and, later on, film and television programs. Has any other American entertainer ever been so central to the “branding” of the American experience inside and outside of the United States? With the possible exception of Elvis Presley and the globalization of Rock and Roll, it is doubtful that anyone else has come close.

Cody Studies is a thriving field because of the color and vibrancy of its subject matter, and because scholars interpret Buffalo Bill’s Wild West set pieces as a symbolic staging of various aspects of nineteenth-century American culture, including Manifest Destiny and American colonialism. The Buffalo Bill myth was, from its inception, a deliberate exercise in cultural nationalism and national allegory. Into the crowded field of Cody Studies charges Michelle Delaney’s delightfully illustrated and designed *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill’s Wild West*, which sets itself apart from other studies with its focus on visual culture, advertising, and material culture.

Delaney is an accomplished writer and curator who is currently Assistant Director for History and Culture at the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian. Her previous book was also on Cody and visual culture: *Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Warriors: A Photographic History* by Gertrude Kasebier (Harper

Collins, 2007), a feast of photographs, pictorial miscellany, correspondence, and narrative about how one of America's greatest nineteenth-century photographers, Gertrude Kasebier (1852-1934), documented and immortalized Cody's Native American performers such as Chief Iron Tail and Chief Flying Hawk of the Oglala Lakota. *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* attests to Delaney's continuing fascination with visual culture and telling human details about the people who made up Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Her new book is bursting with rare photographs and color posters, many of which are drawn from the Buffalo Bill Museum at the Buffalo Bill Center of the West in Cody, Wyoming. The book carries the imprimatur of The William F. Cody Series on the History and Culture of the American West, a joint venture of The University of Oklahoma Press and The Buffalo Bill Center of the West, which sets the gold standard for impeccably researched and gorgeously designed illustrated books about William F. Cody and the American West. Delaney's book provides extensive scholarly annotation and exposition to the story of Cody's formidable publicity machine, alternating between discussions of the men who designed and printed the Buffalo Bill posters, and commentary and context on individual posters, printing companies, and artists. *Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* is a bold survey, a road map that sketches the contours of a vast subject, blazing a trail for future studies in the history of American visual culture.

In the first half of the book Delaney details the technological and marketing strategies that were central to the promotion of Buffalo Bill's Wild West. Chapter one explains how a sophisticated lithographic printing process took Europe and the U.S. by storm in the second half of the nineteenth century, especially after the invention of the steam-powered printing press. A nineteenth-century commercial poster

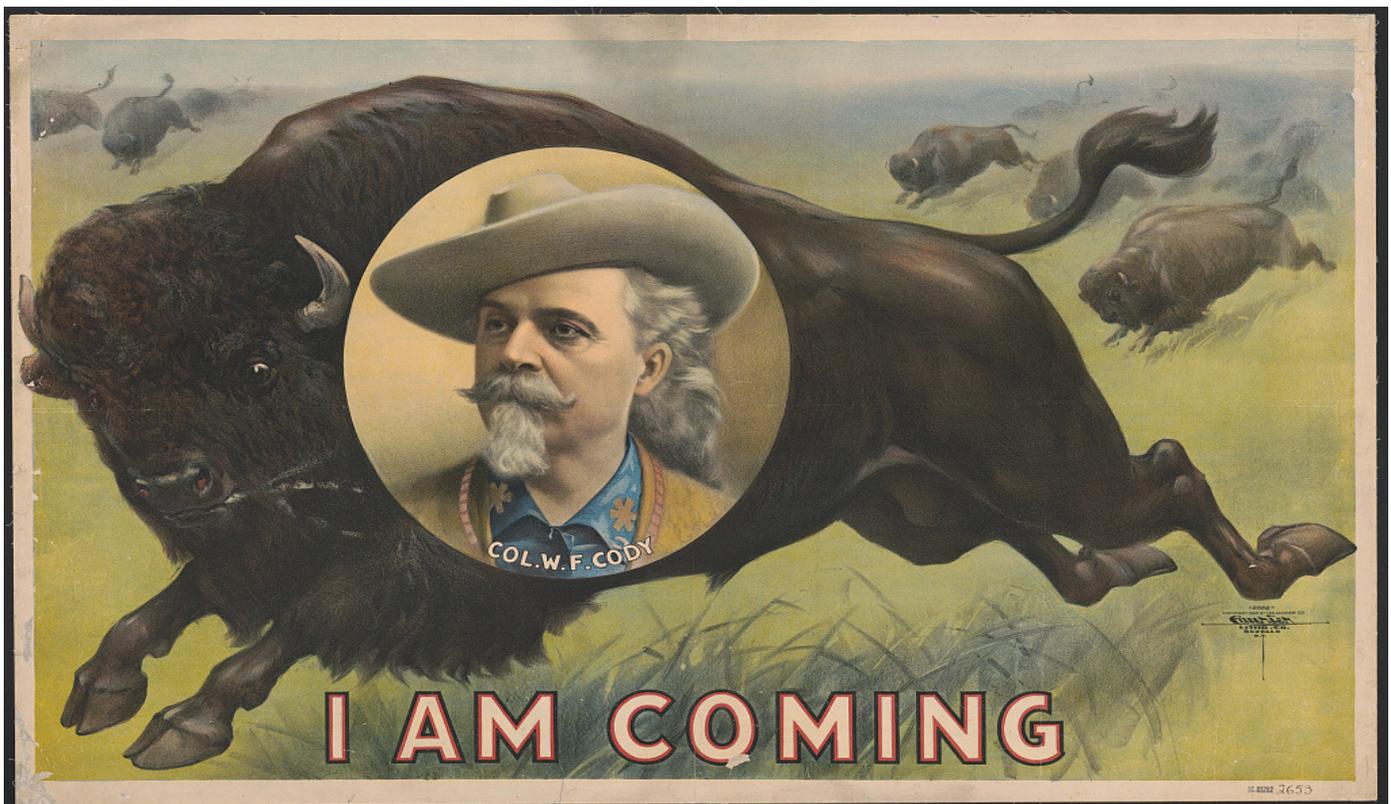
began its life as a watercolor or oil painting before being transferred onto lithographic stones or metal plates that steam powered printing presses rolled onto large sheets of paper. This ingenious, technologically-driven golden age of the poster became a conspicuous fact of urban life in American cities and small towns, with buildings and blocks of buildings wrapped in vivid advertisements for theaters, circuses, and commercial products. Thanks to its large size and scaled up print runs, and its repetitive or serialized posting, the late nineteenth-century poster was both an outgrowth of capitalist industrialization and a democratization of illustration. Pictures sprang out of the pages of books, newspapers, and magazines to dazzle passersby on city streets. To capitalize on the formidable advertising power of this art form, Cody and his collaborators drew inspiration from popular, nineteenth-century Western artists, such as George Catlin, Frederic Remington, and Charles Schreyvogel, whose colorful and dynamic representations of Native Americans, cowboys, and soldiers monumentalized and idealized Western expansionism. In this way, the advertising for Cody's show represented both a standardization and reinterpretation of themes, motifs, and styles in American art history.

In this section, Delaney also details the financial relationships, divergent styles, technologies, and artistic processes behind Cody's partnerships with various American poster companies. Although Cody partnered with over a dozen different printers during his long career as a showman, his most significant advertising relationships were with A. Hoen and Company in Baltimore, Courier Lithographic Company in Buffalo, and the Enquirer Job Printing and Strobridge Lithographing companies in Cincinnati. Delaney's study of each of these companies in relation to the Wild West is exciting on two levels: it shows how these companies "visualized" the Buffalo Bill myth, with all of its racialized and militarized overtones,

and also hints at new approaches to the study of nineteenth-century American visual culture, specifically the representations of male bodies and animals in circus advertising, the closest analogue to Cody's Wild West advertising.

Baltimore's Hoen company dominated pictorial depictions of the Wild West in the 1880s, laying the foundation to subsequent publicity campaigns and pictorial motifs. Their posters are romantic and expansive, full of action and hints of contextual storytelling. *En media res* tableaux of battles and shootouts, such as the c. 1887 posters "A Prairie Pic-Nic" or "On the Stage Coach," are full of standard Western action but relatively simple from a thematic point of view. In contrast, posters like "Buffalo Bill to the Rescue" (c. 1887) and "The White Eagle" (c. 1890), showed other characters and background elements and hinted at stories unfolding out of the added detail. In the case of "The White Eagle," we see a stylized representation of Cody staring into the distance while a caravan of wagons idles in the background. The

scout is leading the pioneers through dangerous territory and has moved ahead to ensure safe passage. Buffalo Bill's outward gaze scrutinizes a world of potential threats to the tranquil promise of domesticity evoked by the wagons in the distance behind him. I was struck by Hoen's inventive portrait montages of "Distinguished Visitors to Buffalo Bill's Wild West," in both male and female versions, which are reminiscent of photo album pages, and the single-character posters that focus on an individual ethnic horseman type like the Cossack or the Gaucho, which evoke the concept of serialization. The celebrity montages suggest connections between Buffalo Bill advertising and other forms of American visual culture: magazine photomontages, photo albums, and trading cards. We can read the association of Cody with famous visitors to his show as an ambiguous text; while Buffalo Bill's celebrity seems to overturn Old World hierarchies of power and class, decentering kings, princesses, and countesses around the visage of the



*I am coming* - Col. W.F. Cody (c. 1900). Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, POS - CIRCUS - Buff. Bill 1900, no. 2

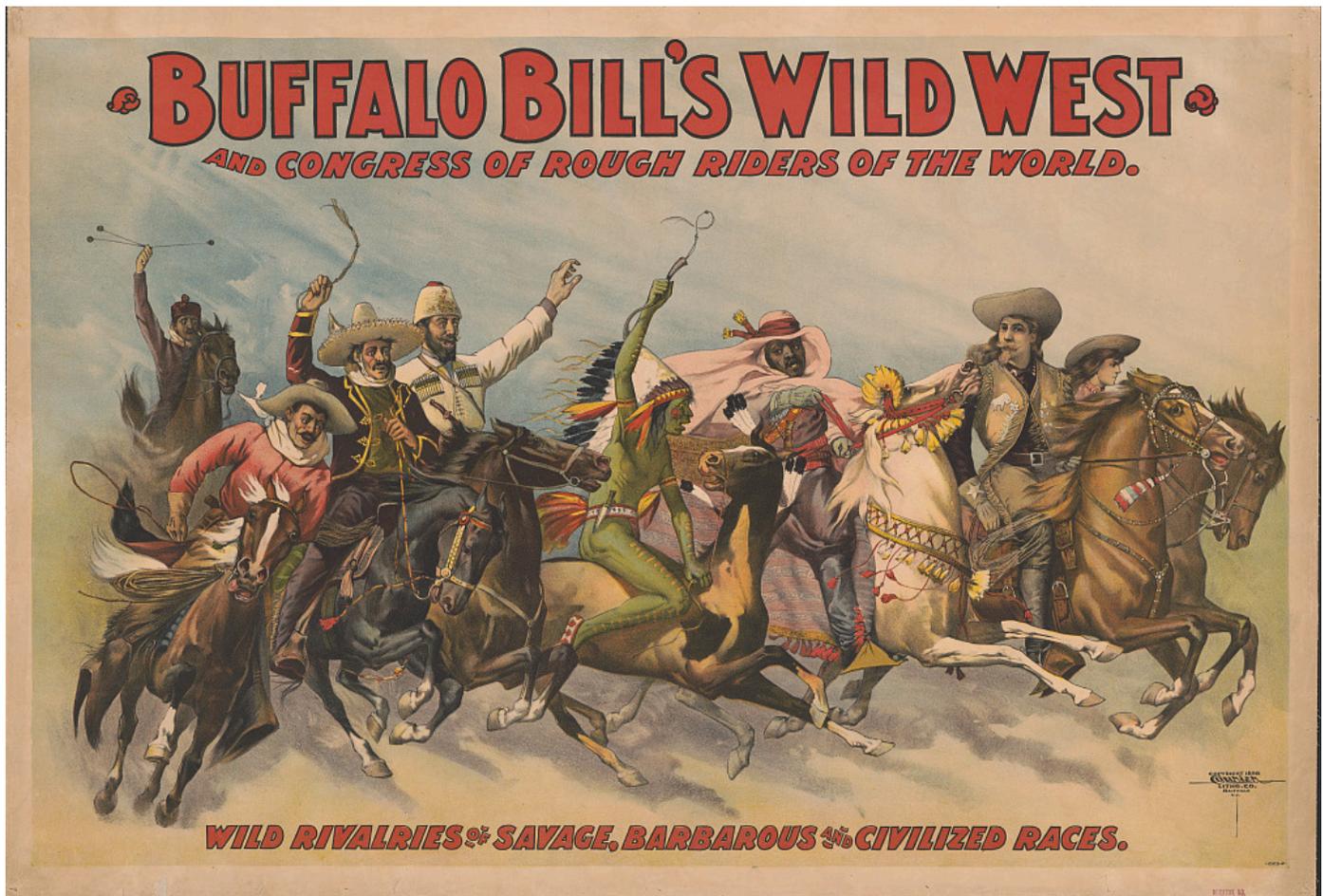
American frontier hero, his positioning in these portrait galleries also suggests a fetishization of those same feudal hierarchies of power and influence.

In 1896, Cody partnered with New York newspaperman George Bleistein, whose Courier Lithographic Company took Wild West advertising in a slightly new direction by adding complex—even daring—layouts into the representation of Buffalo Bill's shows. One favored layout in a series of posters titled "Actual Scenes-Genuine Characters," consisted in the layering of three horizontal panoramic images, one on top of the other, with a bust in the center. It is evident, as with some of the more interesting Hoen posters, that designers are searching for ways to layer in as much story content into each poster, to give depth to each image and hint at the backstories of different characters like gauchos or "Indians" featured in the Wild West show. Other innovations were peculiar abstract designs, such as "Center Hit of the Century" (1896), a poster made up of four concentric circles similar to early film strips designed for a "zoetrope" cylinder that, while spinning, created the illusion of movement. In short, the drive to make the poster come alive, to somehow create the illusion of motion, underlines how the designers at Courier committed themselves to pushing their commercial art form to the limit. The poster "I Am Coming" (1900), in contrast, breaks with the simple, representational naturalism of action scenes by superimposing a large oval-sized portrait of Cody upon the figure of a charging buffalo. It is hard to know what to make of this appealing yet odd layout.

The design work by Enquirer Job Printing and Strobridge Lithographing Company, both based out of Cincinnati, arguably the most important center for large scale printing in the U.S., is flatter, and more standardized. However, Delaney gained access to a treasure trove of archival materials about Strobridge,

which allows her to delve into the printing processes of that company and its star illustrators. This explains why Strobridge gets its own chapter. In the context of the flow of Delaney's treatment of representations of Buffalo Bill's Wild West, the Strobridge chapter might seem like a detour, but within the context of understanding the materiality and technologies of turn of the century printing, it is a compelling snapshot into the history of U.S. advertising. For example, Strobridge was particularly adept at creating "colossal stands", which were a patchwork of smaller posters that fit together like a mosaic to create murals that could be as large as nine feet by ninety-one. "These rare enormous poster displays" writes Delaney, "were carefully designed and posted to create visual impact and feelings of awe in passersby" (113).

In a chapter titled "Wild West Diplomacy and Going Global", Delaney explores two intertwined developments in Buffalo Bill advertising campaigns: militarism and internationalism. During his European tours (1887-1892, 1902-1906), Cody's advertising team cast him in the role of an American cultural ambassador who staged rituals of transnational cooperation and amity. Cody's show accomplished this through the inclusion of European cavalry troops in his performances, and symbolic displays of deference and respect to European powers. At the same time, these posters presented Cody as a power broker. For example, a British company named Weiners depicted the crossed flags of France and the United States behind a figure of the famous showman, with garlands of flowers joining the flags together. In another lithograph by the same company, Cody is accompanied by American and French flag bearers, with the phrase "entente cordiale" drawn in the clouds over their heads and in a script at the bottom of the poster. The use of this phrase, Delaney explains, refers to an agreement between France and Britain to lessen their international rivalry. By putting



*Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World Wild rivalries of savage, barbarous and civilized races / Courier Litho. Co., Buffalo, N.Y.: Courier Litho. Co., c1898. Courtesy Library of Congress Prints and Photographs, POS - CIRCUS - Buff. Bill 1898, no. 2*

Buffalo Bill in the central role of mediator, such posters project an optimistic and self-congratulatory vision of the U.S. as a conduit for international amity. To this reviewer at least, this kind of imagery implied that the American exceptionalism that had forged Buffalo Bill as a legendary scout, set the U.S. apart from the Old World, and gave it a providential new role as a leader in geopolitical cooperation. Future studies might elucidate the possible connections between this kind of advertising imagery and the stated and unstated aims of U.S. foreign policy goals in Europe at the turn of the century.

Naturally, such alliances precluded nations considered to be inferior rivals to U.S. power and interests, such as Spain and China, who were cast as villains in Wild West depictions of the the Spanish American War (1898) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901). The staging of Roosevelt's "charge of the Rough Riders"

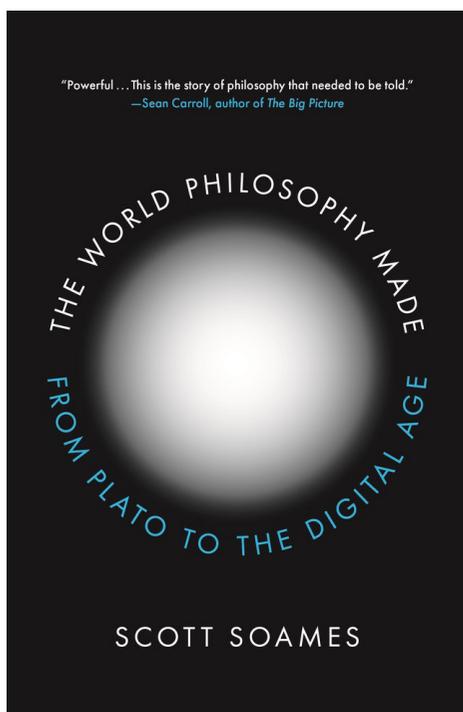
on San Juan Hill in the Wild West has provoked a lot of incisive commentary in American Studies about the relationship between frontier motifs and the colonialist ideology of Manifest Destiny. Delaney notes the surprising connections between Cody's posters and the war by reprinting an interview from April 1898 in which the famous showman brags about how he would use "Indians" to defeat the Spanish in Cuba, foreshadowing the mythological afterglow that Roosevelt's Rough Riders would achieve three months later at San Juan Hill. These odd crosspollinations of myth, celebrity, current events, and contemporary military history have exerted a powerful pull in Cody Studies. Delaney's book adds the provocative piece of pictorial advertising to the conversation. Another example of the synergy between these domains is Fredric Remington, whose paintings of the frontier served as models for many Buffalo Bill posters produced by

Calhoun printing company, and who also painted Roosevelt's charge on San Juan Hill. Unlike other celebratory depictions of the battle by Kunz and Allison printers in Chicago, Remington's painting has the vitality and dynamism that was a hallmark of Wild West advertising iconography. While Delaney does not suggest lines of direct influence or causation, her analysis demonstrates that pictorial representations of the Spanish American War and American advertising culture inhabited the same cultural and political moment, resonating with each other in revealing and potentially significant ways.

In the category of international combat, Delaney also notes Cody's representations of U.S. participation in the Boxer Rebellion. A Wild West poster of U.S. forces fighting Chinese foes, alongside French and British forces, titled "Battle of Tien-Tsin and Capture of Peking" (1901), capitalized on the idea that there was a visible dividing line between civilized nations and "savage" ones. Delaney dwells on this topic in her discussion of several posters in which cultural encounters channel racist stereotypes. The oddest is "Wild Rivalries of Savage, Barbarous and Civilized Races" (1898), which inexplicably positions a green-skinned "Indian" at the center of a cavalcade of different ethnic types. A disturbing poster about the Boxer Rebellion depicts a fallen Chinese boxer in caricature, his brown face in a rictus of unnatural rage as a Rough Rider holds a bayonet over his body. In sum, Cody's entrepreneurial spirit in adapting his show to enhance its appeal to international audiences, and to transform it into a celebratory display of U.S. military interventions in Cuba and China, demonstrates how prophetic Frederick Jackson Turner was in his 1893 paper when he hinted that the "closing" of the American frontier might call out for new frontiers to test and define Anglo-American identity, to help it escape from

the "bondage of the past" (Turner 40). This dialectic between the past and the present, between the glories of frontier battles and the pictorial thrill of new, imperialist ventures, is the subject of several parts of Delaney's book.

*Art and Advertising in Buffalo Bill's Wild West* is a major contribution to the study of nineteenth and early twentieth century American visual culture that points to intriguing future directions for research on advertising, frontier imagery, and American popular culture. Future studies might draw connections between the iconography of Cody's advertising machine and other forms of illustration, such as collectible cards (cigarette cards, for example), dime novel covers and illustrations, and comics. Buffalo Bill appeared in all three of these kinds of print, and exploring their relationship to the posters that Delaney studies in her book would be fruitful. Another study waiting to happen, and for which Delaney's book lays the groundwork, is a comparative study of the iconography of nineteenth-century American circus advertising in comparison to Buffalo Bill's Wild West show posters. As Delaney notes, the same printing companies produced advertising for both types of entertainment, and we might assume that many of the artists in these companies worked in both areas. What conventions, layouts, schemas, or flourishes were specific to one or the other? The mention of these directions for future study is not a slight of Delaney's already encyclopedic, and wide-ranging book, but the opposite. The thematic richness of the vibrant posters, the variety of topics covered, and the useful insights and contexts provided stimulates the imagination and keeps us turning the pages.



**Review of *The World Philosophy Made: From Plato to the Digital Age* by Scott Soames. Princeton University Press. 2019. 439 pp.**

JUSTIN SKIRRY

Scott Soames's book, *The World Philosophy Made: From Plato to the Digital Age*, provides an extended response to concerns raised in a New York Times opinion piece entitled "When Philosophy Lost Its Way" by Robert Frodeman and Adam Briggle. Here, the authors argue that philosophy's entrance into research institutions in the 19th century, alongside natural and social scientific disciplines, resulted in a "purified" version of philosophy divorced from the disciplinarily mixed-up "mangle" it once was. They conclude that philosophy should be getting its "hands dirty" in the world of everyday people living outside the pristine corridors of the ivory tower.

Soames, however, disagrees with this assessment, arguing that Western academic philosophy has not "lost its way" but "was continuing its record of impressive success both in laying the conceptual foundations for advances in theoretical knowledge and in advancing the systematic study of ethics, political philosophy, and human well-being." (ix) This book's project is to refute

Frodeman and Briggle's thesis by explaining the various ways philosophy has supported and contributed to various areas of human inquiry.

The volume begins with a couple of rather cursory chapters on ancient and medieval philosophy where Soames recognizes how ancient philosophy provided guidance for human well-being and insight into the meaning of life. He then claims that medieval Christendom took over these questions of meaning and flourishing, which set philosophy free to focus on the acquisition of knowledge about the world and ourselves. The third chapter continues the history lesson with a more detailed account of the rise of modern science from Copernicus to Newton. Chapter four explains enlightenment political and economic philosophy with particular attention to Adam Smith's account of free markets. It is at this point that the book shifts from an historical to a topical structure. The remaining topical chapters continue the story of philosophy with an emphasis on 20th and 21st century analytic philosophy and its contributions to the natural and social sciences. The point seems to be that philosophy has not lost its way but has touched all our lives through science, technology, politics, economics, law, etc.

This approach, however, points toward a very conservative, Anglo-American understanding of philosophy and its relation to the world at large. First, it is clear that Soames' comfort zone is the history and impact of analytic philosophy on the sciences. This project takes up more than two-thirds of the book and is presented in a way that is largely inaccessible to the layperson. The writing style quickly falls back on analytic philosophy's penchant for logicizing natural language through the specialized jargon of the field. In fact, most chapters are strewn with variables tied together with esoteric symbols for various logical functions and relations that are intended to lay bare the logical structure of natural language stripped of its content. This aspect of analytic methodology serves

to “de-mangle” or “purify” language in a way that clarifies concepts for academic philosophers while also walling it off from those not versed in its customs.

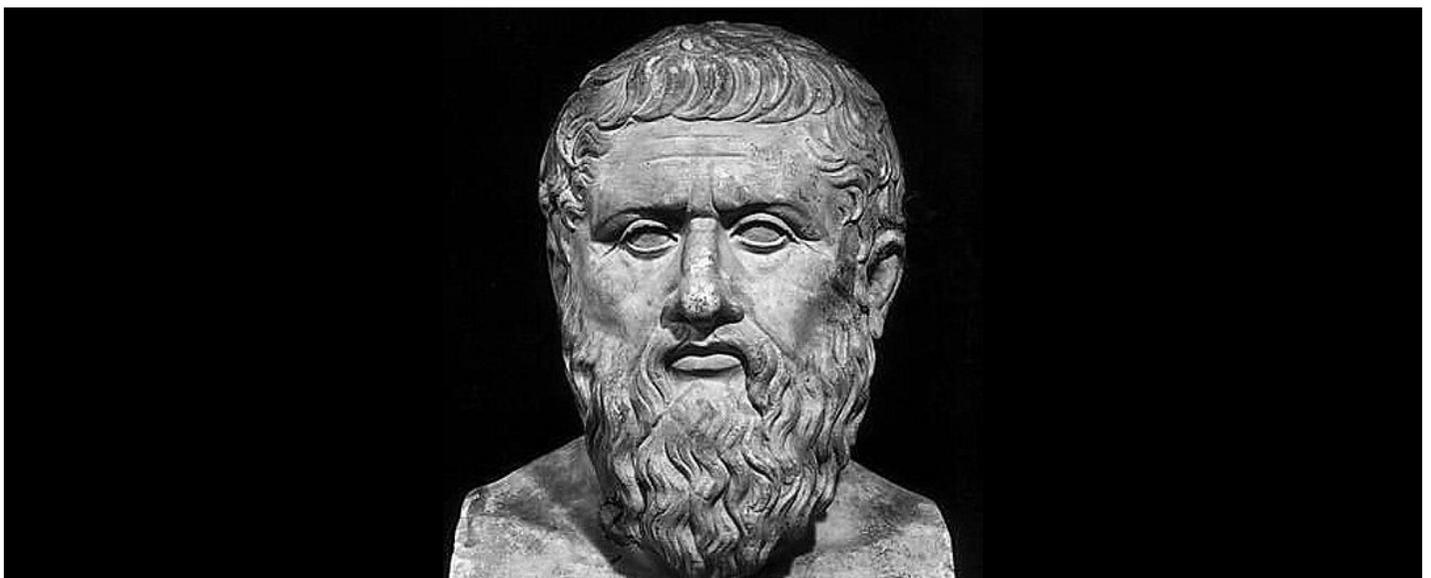
The book also contains a political element that is both alienating and misleading. In chapter eleven, Soames continues his discussion of free markets from chapter four with an erudite discussion of Friedrich von Hayek’s account of free choice, free markets, and the benefits of capitalism. Yet, when Soames’s attention turns to Karl Marx, the account is largely uninformed with a focus only on its negative effects, such as Marx’s “failure” to predict a communist revolution or the authoritarian regimes that arose in nominally communist countries. The negative effects of capitalism, like severe income inequality, and the positive effects of Marxism, like extensive social safety nets in many European and Scandinavian countries, are not mentioned at all.

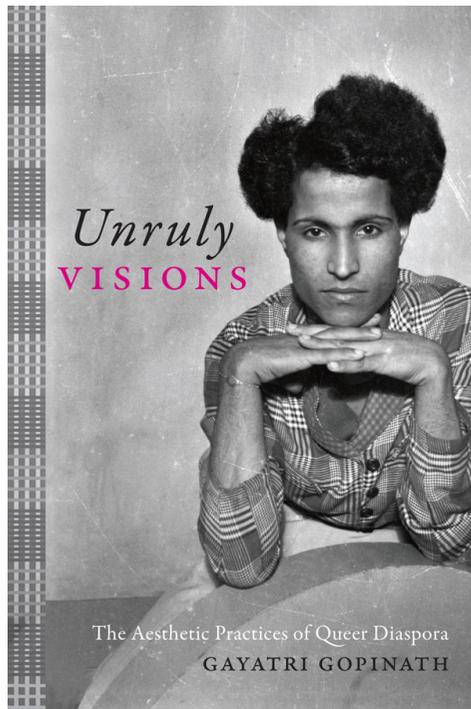
As it stands, Soames gives the impression that (a) capitalism is the only beneficial economic system, (b) Marxism is only harmful, and (c) this is what a rational person should think. It is clearly a lopsided account in favor of the author’s preferred political and economic positions. Of course, everyone is entitled to their own political points of view. But a scholarly work purporting to demonstrate philosophy’s influence on the world should be more judicious with opposing views and their effects on the world - both positive and

negative.

Another troubling feature of Soames’s book is its almost exclusive focus on white male philosophers. Some women philosophers are briefly glossed or mentioned in passing, while non-white and non-western philosophers are excluded entirely. A more even-handed approach would recognize the contributions to the world from thinkers like Wollstonecraft, Beauvoir, Nussbaum, Alain Locke, Dubois, Appiah, Fanon, Angela Davis, and Laozi, to name just a few. To exclude them is to imply that only white men are capable of philosophically shaping the world. A claim that is empirically false.

To conclude, Soames does an excellent job explaining analytic philosophy’s contributions to many scientific fields. Every chapter is packed with explanations of the issues, theories, and the canonical (white, male) thinkers that populate a particular area of analytic philosophy. It is a very informative volume for those with the appropriate interests and training. However, in the end, Soames does not adequately refute Frodeman’s and Briggles’ thesis. Instead, this book leads the reader on a guided tour of the cold, hard labyrinthine halls of analytic philosophy’s ivory tower. This is a clean place of sterile analysis for the select few. It is a place where philosophy influences the world at a distance and only indirectly through the sciences while safely tucked away from the “mangle” of everyday life.





**Review of *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora* by Gayatri Gopinath. Duke University Press. 2018. 248 pp.**

SOHEL SARKAR

A film theatre marquee that reads, “If you know what you’re looking for, the backward glance can be a glimpse into the future”; a reinvented ‘honeymoon’ photograph in an indeterminate location, remarkable only for its utter desolation and loneliness; a reframed childhood photograph of a picturesque Australian landscape that on closer inspection reveals bits of other photographs torn apart and imperfectly sutured together. These are among the countless visual texts that constitute the archives that Gayatri Gopinath delves into in her 2018 book, *Unruly Visions; Aesthetic Practices of the Queer Diaspora*. It is a body of work that trains its sights on the quotidian and the inconsequential to arrive at alternative histories and affiliations, speaks to the productive possibilities of dwelling in a state of suspension and disorientation, and envisions new worlds that open up once we reject fantasies of return to lost origins or homelands.

Gopinath’s book is an extensive

curatorial project that weaves together queer studies, area studies, and affect studies, and draws on genres as diverse as photography (Allen deSouza, Chitra Ganesh, David Kalal, Tracey Moffatt, Seher Shah, Akram Zaatari), film (Aurora Guerrero, Ligy Pullappally), memoirs (Saidiya Hartman), poetry (Agha Shahid Ali), painting (Ganesh, Moffatt), and web-based art installations (Sheba Chhachhi, Ganesh, Mariam Ghani). Gopinath deftly arranges and repositions the works of these contemporary queer diasporic artists to identify a shared queer visual aesthetic. Her main claim is that this aesthetic can only be seen and understood through an ‘unruly vision’ or a ‘queer optic’—a way of seeing, knowing, and moving through the world that is both impossible and unintelligible through a normative lens.

*Unruly Visions* takes forward the work that Gopinath started in her critically acclaimed 2005 book, *Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures*, where she examined how queer diasporic practices make possible sexual subjectivities and desires that are rendered invisible or unintelligible within dominant nationalist and diasporic discourses. A queer reading of mainstream and feminist diasporic cultural texts in *Impossible Desires* allowed her to identify the gaps and slippages where such non-normative subjectivities find the space to exist. But while she pointed to the limitations and occlusions of viewing the world through the binary lens of nation and diaspora in this earlier text, she did not quite succeed in dislodging that binary and coming up with an alternative.

In *Unruly Visions*, the search for that alternative leads Gopinath to train her lens on the “minor sites and locations of queer possibility”, namely, the region. Not only does she propose a revised understanding of queer diaspora through critical analyses of their aesthetic practices, she also establishes the ways in which critical regionalism can interrupt and throw into question the binary distinctions of local vs global, nation vs diaspora, or diaspora vs indigeneity. It is

an exercise that uses as its methodology a “queer curatorial project” (4) that casts an unruly gaze at seemingly disparate regional archives, brings them into dialogue with each other, and reframes them into queer archives that point to alternative histories, and establish affective and affiliative trajectories in ways that coalesce the past, present, and future. This curatorial project bypasses dominant mainstream nation-centred narratives and, instead, centres the so-called trivial and insignificant—the region, the personal/autobiographical, and the familial.

Gopinath’s project builds upon the foundational work of queer theorists such as José Esteban Muñoz, Lauren Berlant, and Jack Halberstam to intervene and challenge assumptions within area studies. In her conceptualisation of a “queer regional imaginary” (19), the region is a relational, and not a prefixed category. By decoupling the diaspora from its usual referent—the nation—the book allows us to think instead about South-South, diaspora-region, or region-to-region connectivities (18), in ways that render apparent the intimacies of our conjoined pasts and potential futures. At the same time, it holds up to scrutiny dominant discourses of queerness that remain oblivious to regionally inflected gender and sexual formations. As in *Impossible Desires*, Gopinath’s understanding of queerness extends beyond sexuality to encompass non-normative modes of reading the archives or looking at the world.

In the first chapter, Gopinath brings together Ligy Pullappally’s 2004 queer diasporic film *Sancharram*, the visual art of David Dasharath’s Kalal’s reworking of Raja Ravi Varma’s paintings, and Sheba Chachhi’s web-based artwork *Winged Pilgrims*. These texts foreground a queer regional imaginary, which operates as a counter to nationalist cartographies that aggressively obscure the multiple socialites of a region. Gopinath argues for a peculiarly queer perspective on migrant or diasporic populations by examining representations of the Southern Indian state of Kerala in these texts as sites of a queer regional cartography that challenge the dominance of the nation-state. This is the most evident in the comparison Gopinath makes between the 1998 film *Fire*, touted to be India’s first ‘lesbian film’ and *Sancharram* (2004). In her analysis, the outrage against Mira Nair’s depiction of a same-sex relationship between two sisters-in-law in *Fire* had much to do with the film’s setting in Hindi-speaking North India, a region that is often used a stand-in for the nation as a whole. The depiction of same-sex love in this context presents an urgent and visible challenge to the heterosexual patriarchal nationalist imaginary. *Sancharram*, in contrast, being set in Kerala, remains firmly rooted in the realm of the region. At the same time, its depiction of same-sex love is marked by transnational feminist and gay rights discourses, allowing it to both supersede a national frame and escape the nation’s ire. Region is also read in a supranational



Sheba Chhachhi

sense. Chachhi's queer diasporic framing of Asia rejects a Eurocentric gaze to map older histories of encounter and exchange that predate European colonialism and foreground South-South connectivities. All three texts, then, make use of the region in different ways to force us to look beyond the limited frame of the nation and offer alternate modes of affiliation.

In Chapter Two, the concept of queer regional imaginary is extended to personal/autobiographical visual texts like photographer Chitra Ganesh's reinvention of her migrant South Asian family's photo album, Aurora Guerrero's 2012 queer Latina coming-of-age film *Mosquita Y Mari*, and the poetry of Kashmiri American poet Agha Shahid Ali. Gopinath argues that these texts use personal histories of queer diasporic nostalgia and memorialization to subvert dominant heteronormative framings of migrant subjectivity and familial and kinship relationships in transnational landscapes. Set in "off-center spaces" and often suspended in a state of disorientation and "staying lost", the very indeterminacy of region in these texts leaves open the possibility of imagining and shaping new pathways.

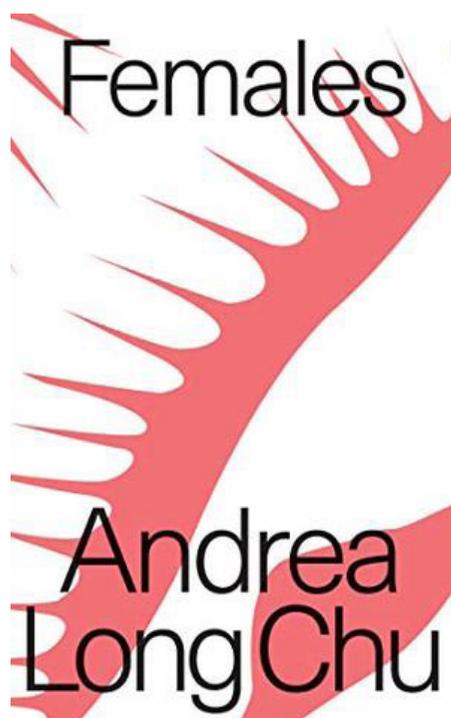
In Chapter Three, the aesthetic practices of queer diasporas are mobilised to connect histories, formations, and processes that are seemingly unrelated in geographical and temporal terms. Gopinath utilises the lens of queer affiliation to expose proximities and connections between diaspora studies and indigenous studies, instead of viewing them in oppositional terms. By juxtaposing the works of three artists—Tracey Moffatt, Seher Shah, and Allen DeSouza—which appear to have little in common in terms of regional affiliation, theme, and genre, Gopinath, once again offers us an alternative logic of identity and belongingness. She identifies unexpected collisions between British colonialism, white settler colonialism, postcolonial histories, and imperialism in relation to undercurrents of capital and labour across nation-states as underlying points

of interconnection that draw these texts together.

In the final chapter, the works of Chitra Ganesh, Maryam Ghani, and Akram Zaatari support a critical meditation on how queer visual aesthetic practices harness affective possibilities to produce interconnections between bodies, regional communities, geographies, and temporalities. The highlight of the chapter, and perhaps also the book, is the analysis of Akram Zaatari's curatorial work on the photographer Hashem El Madani—it is his photographed figure, 'Abed, a tailor', that gazes at the reader calmly from the cover of *Unruly Visions*. Gopinath is at her most lucid as she examines how Zaatari's curation of the Lebanese-born photographer El Madani's aesthetic practices perform new histories, explore the effects of war and violence—particularly in their fascination with the figure of the Lebanese resistance fighter (153)—and also offer an alternative, queer optics of same-sex desire.

By weaving together these seemingly incongruent visual texts, Gopinath successfully stages unexpected encounters between disparate geographies, temporalities, racial, and diasporic formations, as well as colonial and postcolonial displacements and dispossessions. But while she is careful to explain their interconnections, keeping up with this train of thought requires an attentive and patient reader. More crucially, in drawing these comparisons, Gopinath often runs the risk of conflating diverse diasporic and migration histories. It is a risk that she is keenly aware of and flags off at several points in the text, yet it is not something that she is able to fully overcome.

That said, the book is an important intervention in the fields of queer studies, affect studies, and most importantly, area studies. Gopinath's unique take on the unruliness of these archives makes for delightful, if painstakingly patient, reading. In illuminating newer ways of understanding the past and the present, time and space, and history and memory, this is a project executed with great nuance and care.



**Review of *Females* by Andrea Long Chu.**  
**Verso. 2019. 112 pp.**

JAMES LAWRENCE SLATTERY

“Everyone is female. And everyone hates it”.

This statement is written large on the back cover. It is inclusive – overly so – and direct. Yet despite its pointed manner, what these words *mean* remains the central enigmatic kernel that I kept picking at when trying to locate what it is that Andrea Long Chu’s *Females* is arguing for, and against.

It is a slender book, one that could probably fit in the back pocket of your jeans. Yet despite its small size, the imprint it leaves will exceed the hour or two it takes to complete. With its witty tone, sliding between theoretical discourse and memoir, it is a thought-provoking and enjoyable text. This particular personal/theory genre hybrid has gained popularity in the last few years, and *Females* may be counted alongside other recent works such as Maggie Nelson’s *The Argonauts* (2015), Paul B. Preciado’s *Testo Junkie* (2013), and Kathy Acker’s *I Love Dick* (2015).

*Females* is structured around the work of Valerie Solanas, most famous for authoring the S.C.U.M. [*Society for Cutting Up Men*] *Manifesto* in 1967 and for shooting

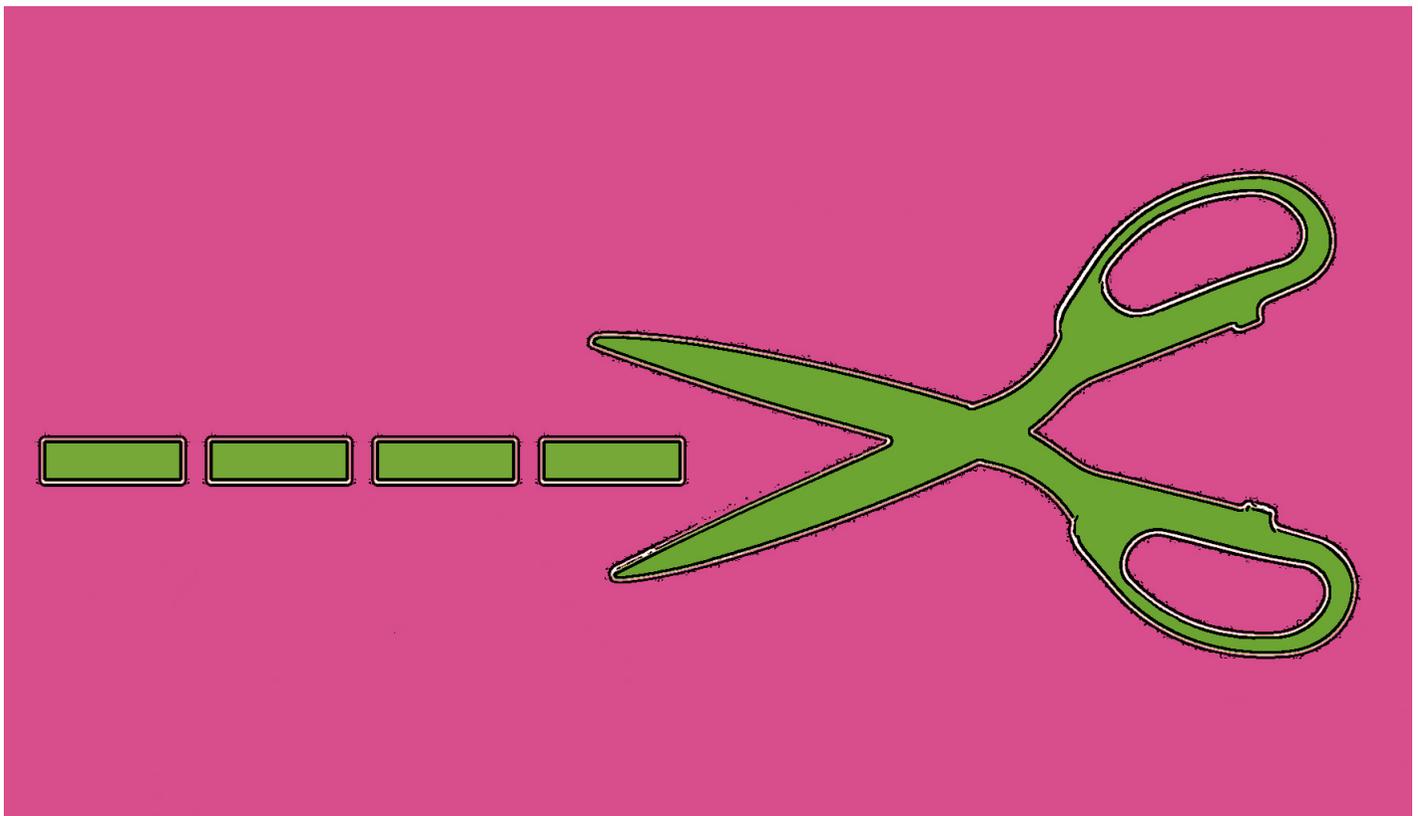
Andy Warhol a year later, in 1968. Chu is obviously and openly a fan of Solanas, thinking through some of the difficulties and contradictions of gender and sexuality with analytical and colloquially admiring references to her. Central to *Females* is Solanas’ lesser known play titled *Up Your Ass*, which was written a few years previous, in 1965. *Females* pays a (not uncritical) homage to the play, in part by formally structuring itself around it. Each section of Chu’s book is designated by a line or two of dialogue from Solanas’ play, whilst the top of every other page bares a scissor symbol followed by a dashed line which echoes the ‘cutting’ of Solanas’ manifesto. As the book progresses, the scissors travel – flipbook style – down this line, animated as you turn each page. This image would usually be followed with the instruction: *Cut Here*. That the little scissors literally reside above Chu’s words speaks to a quality of the text more generally. The book is funny somehow, playful, threaded through with little games and plotlines that progress throughout the time of your reading. But it is also to be taken seriously, not flippantly, even as it sometimes feels like its flipping you the bird. The scissors bring with them a plethora of associations that do not need to be explicitly stated, but present themselves nonetheless. Such associations might include the obvious cutting that Solanas speaks of in her manifesto, castration anxiety which Chu discusses with reference to Sigmund Freud, and Chu’s male-to-female gender reassignment surgery which must have entailed a variety of bodily cuts. The scissors, like the book, conjure a variety of meanings, unrestricted to the most obvious.

Chu is fully aware of the measure of incomprehension *Females* induces. Its central kernel is not an identifiable position per se, but a meditation on being a contemporary subject of desire. Chu recognises desire’s difficulty, its metonymic shifting that makes it hard to locate and easy to misread. Desire fools the subject, making one unable to consciously realise their own desires, or to understand how

their desires play out and are manifested. In this slippery realm that language simultaneously supports and undermines, Chu articulates the seemingly paradoxical relationships of desire's inscriptions as they appear in instances of culture. For example, 'trans exclusionary radical feminist' Janice Raymond and trans-woman icon and model Gigi Gorgeous are not framed as the expected oppositional figures placed either side of a dividing line, but, for Chu, overlap in discussions of how representation can function and becomes embodied. Later in the book, similarly familiar positions are compellingly, convincingly argued as their reverse. A highlight of this is Chu's concise, well-argued assertion that porn is not degrading to those involved through any sense of mastery on the part of the viewer. Watching porn does not give the viewer control, but conversely induces one into submission, which, according to Chu, is the state we actually desire.

Despite my enjoyment, I frequently found myself getting frustrated with the book. This frustration was primarily due to me wanting it to be something it wasn't, willing it to perform in a way it refused. *Females* kept eluding me like this, slipping from my grasp just as I began to think I'd got

it pinned down. Chu positions the subject bluntly and confusingly, purposefully encouraging a contradictory position. This is encapsulated by the statement: "Everyone is female. And everyone hates it". Chu defines the 'female' as standing for "any psychic operation in which the self is sacrificed to make room for the desires of another" (11). 'Female' is specific, yet paradoxically, all inclusive. Depending on how one approaches it, Chu's position could be seen to align, oppose, or prompt a dialogue with Sigmund Freud's theory that the libido is always masculine, or Jacques Lacan's assertions that "Woman does not exist". Although these latter concepts seem to privilege the phallic subject, Chu joins them in complicating sexual difference by engaging only one active space in which the subject occupies: In Chu's case this is the female. Whilst contemporary identity-politics tends to buck against the male/female or masculine/feminine binary of sexual difference, the expansion of identity markers (as seen in the often growing LGBTQAI+ acronym) ultimately serve to maintain difference at the level of signification, precisely through naming what one is and thus, what one is also *not*. In contrast, Chu problematises sexual



difference and, by extension, the identity-politics trend in liberal popular feminist and 'queer' cultural vernacular that aligns recognition with liberation. Purposefully leading in the phrasing that "everyone is female", as it will surely provoke reactions that assert we are not all homogenous bodies, might one rephrase Chu's statement as: "we all occupy the space of the feminine" (and we all hate it)?

It is not just my own engagement with psychoanalytic theory that encouraged me to approach *Females* with regard to Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan. Chu herself draws widely on Sigmund Freud, and particularly his most controversial theories of penis envy and castration anxiety. Jacques Lacan, however, remains decidedly absent. Part of my initial dissatisfaction with the book was this omission that appeared glaring, particularly as I read Chu's definition of 'females' as riffing off a Lacanian theorising of subjectivity, namely, that of alienation produced through the subject's entry in to language and desire. One of Lacan's famous aphorisms kept springing to mind: "desire is desire of the other". Throughout the book Chu seems to suggest that we are all female in the sense that we are all subjects of the other's desire and, by way of this position, veil submission with the cultural codifications of mastery. If this reading is agreeable, then Lacan's theory of the subject appears vital, and forms a present absence in the book. But this is not to say that finding illuminating points of theoretical connection satisfies *Females'* enigmatic character. When I ground my understanding of Chu's central argument through a Lacanian prism of desire, I become more comfortable with the text's production of meaning, before worrying that in this gesture of excavation that privileges my own academic comfort zone, I misinterpret Chu's specifically unstable and inaccessible 'point'. Coming to a coherent understanding of the book's aim, whether political, philosophical, cultural, rhetorical or sociological, is to approach the work in a way it works to resist. That is, *Females* resists

my very desire to 'know' it.

*Females'* memoir aspect, which weaves through the book's entirety, manages to avoid onanism. Instead of a self-prophesising strategy that might serve to legitimate the (perhaps controversial) theoretical paradigms being introduced and explored, Chu's recount of herself is rather self-effacing. The art piece they describe making in college, involving a piano, sounds pretty unappealing and pretentious, as well as disruptive to their roommates at the time. They cheated on their girlfriend. They were addicted to porn. And whilst I don't necessarily consider these personal actions as wrong or bad, it's worth drawing attention to Chu's framing of herself, which resists appearing as a faux pity party or as a means of bolstering their legitimacy or success. Instead, Chu slides between generic registers with a rhetoric that flows into different environments of discourse, yet thoroughly satisfies neither (and that, I believe, is part of their point).

Viewed as purposeful in its perplexing character, the book itself can be recognised as embodying the discourse of desire that it explores by shifting along chains of signification without giving the reader the fantasy of satisfaction through a neat conclusion or sense of closure. Though "Everyone is female. And everyone hates it" sounds assertive, definite, even simple, it is the opposite. Why use 'female'? It is a word so loaded, so specific to a cultural meaning of sex and/or gender, and yet that stability is rendered inert by the inclusion of "everyone" into its category. And why do we 'all' hate it? And what is the 'it' of being 'female' that we 'hate'? Answering any of these questions is a delightful impossibility, and to treat *Females* as a project of clear theoretical argument would be to have misread the text. Like desire's negative structuring, the pleasure of *Females* is located in its very impossibility, its elusive slip.



## The Face as Paradox

Review of *The Face on Film* by Noa Steimatsky. Oxford University Press. 2017. 279 pp.

DR KIERRAN HORNER

The central premise of Noa Steimatsky's fascinating study is the multivalent, polysemous, (chiefly) human face. This filmic face is moving in both senses of the word: cinema captures the face unfolding in time and this emotive image inspires a response in its viewer. Steimatsky plots a paradigm for thinking through the face, elusive and ethereal as it is, positioning her work in contemporary film-philosophical and cine-ethical research.

Beginning with a necessarily potted history of aesthetic images of the face from pre-cinema, 15th century iconic portraiture and daguerreotypes through early narrative cinema, the book returns to these art-forms regularly, weaving their histories and affective potential into analysis of later film. It also hints towards a post-cinematic realm involving the dissemination of moving images of faces on multiple platforms. Within the strictly filmic realms, it ranges through classic Hollywood, silent Soviet, neo-realist, *nouvelle vague*, 60s *avant garde* and art-

house films, and circles back via Paul Thomas Anderson's *Inherent Vice* (2014), a recent film that arguably adopts, develops, and deconstructs a classic Hollywood genre-form.

When engaging with other media, the inter-historical examples are often still rooted in film, such as Andy Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) and the photography of Richard Avedon, the muse for Stanley Donen's *Funny Face* (1957). These various art-forms are utilised in explication of Steimatsky's evolving thesis of the face as the focal point of transitions, liminal hesitations between an array of conflicting dialectics, such as life and death, subject and other, and presence and absence. In Steimatsky's theory, the face embraces oppositions and contradictions, speaking to a facial polyphonics (33).

Steimatsky develops this amorphous notion, the face as a sign of paradoxical plenitude, in a prodigious range of close readings of faces in film. For example, in analysis of Carl Theodor Dreyer's *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc* (1928), the eponymous passion is hinted at in Jeanne's face, which becomes a medium of exchange between life and death. This ambiguity is also found, for the author, in the masks of the 'models' (the unknown, amateur actors) of Bresson's films, as their faces simultaneously display openness and absence. These blank canvasses are investigated fully in the two films of which Steimatsky offers detailed readings, via Bazin, *Diary of a Country Priest* (1951) and *Au Hasard Balthazar* (1966). These analyses of faces become microscopic in the chapter devoted to Barthesian notions of star and glamour, centering on Josef von Sternberg's close-ups of Marlene Dietrich, which speak at once to intimacy and objectification. In these readings – and also in films by Antonioni, Eisenstein, Godard, Hitchcock and more – the face is presented as an image that embraces dichotomies such as real and artificial, past and present, and solid and fluid matter.

Despite the range of works Steimatsky analyses and engages with, there is a distinct lack of reference to female filmmakers and

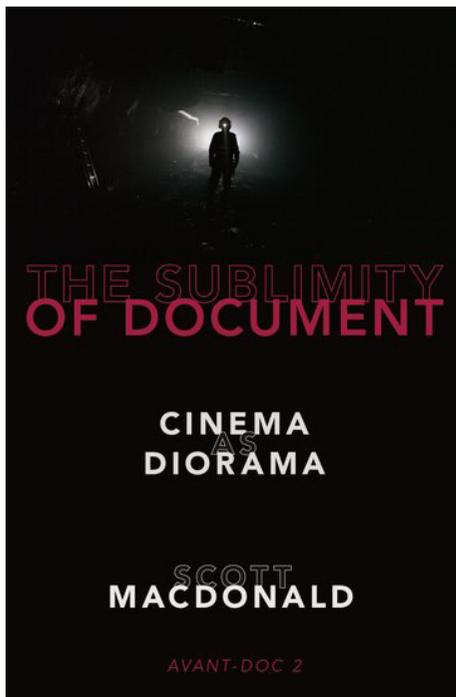
thinkers in this study. This gives an overly male-centred perspective to the presentation of filmic faces, which positions the book outside of the lineage of feminist works (both philosophical and filmic) dedicated to deconstructing gendered hierarchies of object-subject, viewed viewer, and female-male. Considering Steimatsky's central argument, that the face on film is an image that resists definition, and therefore possession, in the gaze of the spectator, this is a missed opportunity to explore questions about, and destabilise notions of, gendered hierarchies. The same is also true about the seeming elision of Levinas for such a study. Steimatsky does cite his now prominent quote about the face not being contained in the plastic image: where the face of the Other 'destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me'. However, the lack of analysis of Levinas's complex and, sometimes, contradictory critique or suspicion of the 'plastic image' – the face of the other is a graven image in his works – suggests so much lost potential, where there are overlaps between Steimatsky's intentions and his. Each works towards an enigmatic relation with the aesthetic image of the face, not least in the ethical question of 'capturing' the face of the Other. It is Levinas's intention, as is Steimatsky's,

to allow the face its freedoms, identities and its perennial mutability. Levinas's thought haunts the text, when, for example, Steimatsky suggests that "[...] as we live face-to-face with others, so we must lend them our regard" (26). This echoes not only Levinas's own theories but also interpretations of them by Levinasian scholars' such as Cathryn Vasseleu. It is a notable absence, then, that there are no deeper, more explicit engagements with Levinas's thought.

Despite these absences, Steimatsky's notion of the face as Janusian nexus of multiple motions, moving each time it is scrutinised, metamorphosing at the same time as it remains (just) a face, is invigorating and timely. Steimatsky's is a theory that is applicable beyond the examples she herself offers in the book, from Bette Gordon's 1983 feature *Variety*, which places its female protagonist in a sleazy, blue movie theatre to reflect the male patrons' shame back at them, to a more recent release such as Céline Sciamma's *Portrait of a Lady on Fire* (2019), in which faces portray and betray much that is beyond their surfaces, resist easy classification, and challenge the definitions of the face gazing as subject and the face gazed upon as object.



Renée Maria Falconetti in *La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1928



**Review of *The Sublimity of Document: Cinema as Diorama* edited by Scott McDonald. Oxford University Press. 2019. 504 pp.**

JULIA STOLYAR

*The Sublimity of Document: Cinema as Diorama* is a compilation of interviews conducted by Scott McDonald with documentary filmmakers and visual artists from US, Canada, Iran, Brazil, Spain and Russia. Various ages, backgrounds, interests, and styles come together in this volume to explore motivation, techniques, the possibilities of the medium, and the experience of documentary filmmaking. Within this kaleidoscope of people, the interviews themselves converge on the subjects' mutual curiosity about the world, and about the human condition, and the need to tell those stories.

Every art has personal roots. Something within artists fuels their curiosity and need to explore. For some of the filmmakers interviewed for this volume, this personal dimension reaches much further. Their *stories* are deeply personal. Carlos Adriano's films, for example, are a tribute to a colleague (Bernardo Vorobow), and Yance Ford's *Strong Island* is an exploration of his brother's death, its effect on himself

and on his family, and on their trust in the justice system in America. Personal stories are an exploration of oneself and a way to explore and come to terms with personal events, but also a powerful way to connect with the audience. The interviews conducted with these filmmakers touch not only on the stories behind these personal films, but on the process and the experience of creating and sharing such narratives.

Another aspect of filmmaking these interviews focus on are how changes in available technologies and equipment affected filmmakers' creative choices and their ability to access and film remote locations. Digital cameras, which are smaller and more portable enable the development of films that would otherwise be too expensive to make. Abbas Kiarostami's *Five*, for which he filmed a series of landscapes, is a contemplative rather than a commercial film. As such, it received little funding. Nevertheless, the film was still possible due to the reduced costs of these newer technologies. Shooting in digital also enabled a smaller crew with less equipment to access distant areas, like coastal villages in Indonesia and Thailand.

Digital filming is not the only recent change in documentary filmmaking. The use of "found footage" and specifically Youtube as source material for films is a new development fostered by the wide spread of the internet. Maxim Pozodorovkin used Youtube for finding news coverage and propaganda videos for his films *Pussy Riot: A Punk Prayer* (2013) and *Our New President* (2018) exploring ideas of "fake news" and the impact of the internet on democracy. For Carlos Adriano, Youtube was beneficial as a source of music and various musical versions of "La Mer" for his film *Sem Título #2: La Mer Larme* (2015). As these examples show, reusing existing footage to tell new stories offers exciting possibilities for innovative filmmaking that these creators are keen to exploit.

Alongside its potentials, "found footage" also throws up a number of ethical considerations. These ethical questions

are explored in the interviews concerning filming in less privileged or vulnerable environments. Gustav Deutsch, for example, used found footage from family videos of vacations by the Adriatic Sea in his film *Adria* (1990). To make sure those family films, which were originally intended for personal use, were handled respectfully, Deutsch made sure that, as much as possible, family members were present at the premiere, and that their responses to the finished film were favourable. Ethical use of found footage can also be achieved through securing the appropriate rights from the people appearing in the footage. This was, initially, the practice that Fred Wiseman implemented with his films. However, as a documentary filmmaker, he maintains that by choosing to film in public institutions, his films fall under the First Amendment, as audiences have a right to know what happens inside those institutions.

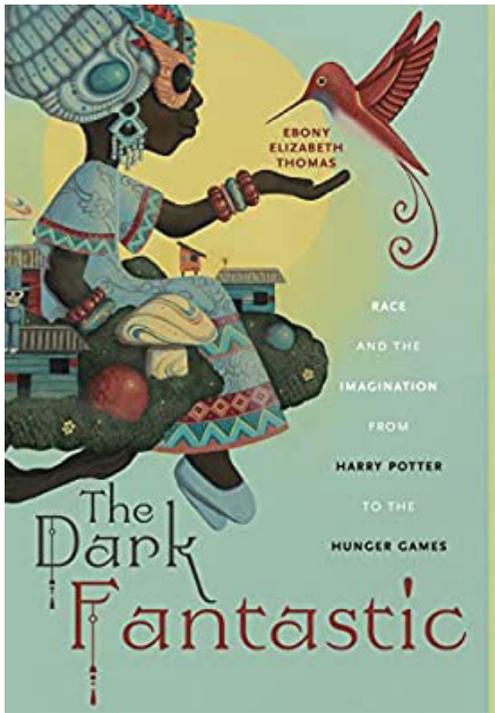
Some of the filmmakers interviewed film in unusual places. Janet Biggs joined the Arctic Circle Program to film *Fade to White* and *In the Cold Edge* (2010), and later filmed in Indonesian sulphur mines for *A Step on the Sun* (2012). Exploring these underrepresented territories allows filmmakers like Biggs to explore popular documentary themes, such as labour and working conditions in contexts that aren't often explored, broadening our understanding of the world and its

communities. Biggs, along with other filmmakers who have worked in similarly unusual places—Ron Fricke who also filmed Indonesian sulphur mines for *Samsara* (2011) and Ben Russell explored Brazilian salt mines in *Good Luck* (2018)—talk about the importance of spending time with the people one films, and getting to know the area. On a more practical level, they also discuss how to gain access to these areas in order to film there, and how they adapted the filming to the terrain. As Biggs says, “plans always change once I have feet on the ground” (315).

The subtitle of the book is “cinema as diorama”, and indeed the filmmakers construct, through the medium of film and video, a diorama of human condition and in various parts of the world. The interviews contained in this volume present their subjects' various interests in exploring current topics, from labour to the internet, their concerns over the ethical use of found footage and open platforms like Youtube, and the impact of digital filming on the possibilities available within their medium. *The Sublimity of Document* is a love letter to the documentary film. Bringing together a wide range of contemporary voices in the field, it lifts the lid on the emotional, practical, and creative elements of documentary filmmaking in a way that is accessible and engaging for anyone with an interest in the form and its future.



Sulfur mining in Kawah Ijen, Indonesia



**Review of *The Dark Fantastic: Race and the Imagination from Harry Potter to The Hunger Games* by Ebony Elizabeth Thomas. New York University Press. 2019. 225 pp.**

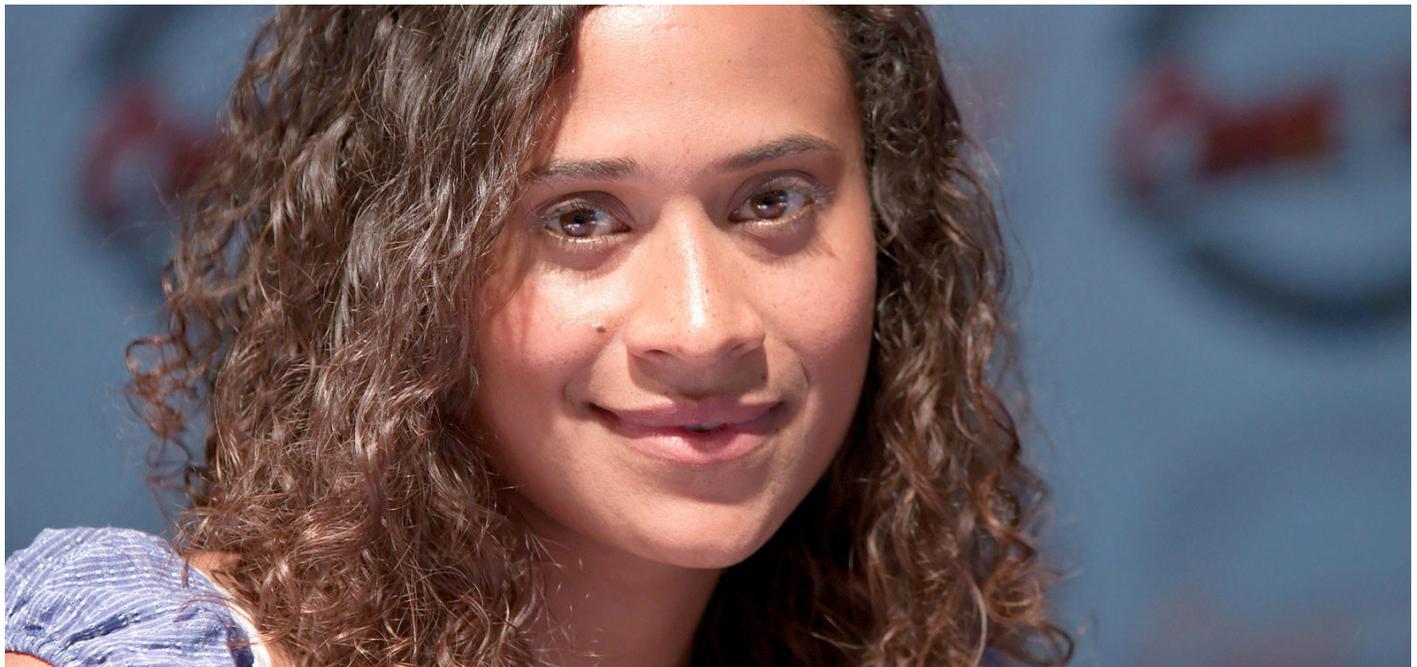
JADE HINCHLIFFE

The lack of diverse characters, stories, and authors in fantasy fiction and its related genres of science fiction, speculative fiction, and gothic fiction is deeply problematic. In *The Dark Fantastic*, Ebony Elizabeth Thomas discusses this issue and puts forward a convincing argument that there is an “imagination gap” (5) which causes children and teens of colour to avoid reading and to avoid engaging with the fantasy genre—a genre that encourages us to dream and imagine—because they do not see themselves represented. Thomas draws on her experiences as a young black girl born in Detroit in the 1970s who grew up reading fantasy fiction, as an author of fantasy fan-fiction, as a school teacher, and now as an associate professor specialising in diversity in children’s literature, youth media and fan studies. Thomas coins the term “dark fantastic” (7) to refer to the “role that racial difference plays” (7) in fantasy fiction. The link between the lack of diverse representation, including the racist

stereotypes and caricatures of characters of colour in the fantasy genre, and the racial and ethnic achievement gaps in literary and education in America is explored by Thomas throughout the book.

Thomas evaluates the work of white, mainstream writers from the UK and USA as the vast majority of fantasy narratives that are consumed in the USA are written by authors who fit this demographic. She focuses on four popular children’s and young adult fantasy series from the twenty-first century: *The Hunger Games* trilogy, BBC’s *Merlin*, *The Vampire Diaries*, and the *Harry Potter* series. Thomas decided to analyse the screen representations of these popular narratives, often in comparison to the source texts, because she argues that racial difference is often more evident in visual narratives. She distances her research from “Black Fantastic” (6) and “Afrofuturist” (6) authors, artists, activists and researchers who create and analyse diverse representations of fantasy stories that challenge mainstream fantasy fiction. Instead, she is interested in deconstructing the mainstream fantasy genre, highlighting the representation and the reception of characters of colour in popular fantasy fiction, who are often negatively portrayed and perceived.

Throughout the book, Thomas engages with and builds upon Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s *Monster Theory* (1996), stating that, in Anglo-American narratives, the “Dark Other occupies the same space in reality that the monster occupies in fantasy” (20). By focusing on the characters who represent the Dark Other, Thomas shows how this figure is “central to both the fantastic and the construction of imagined whiteness” (25). She suggests that there is a “cycle of the dark fantastic” (26) wherein the Dark Other is firstly seen as a spectacle and then, after a period of hesitation, they are subjected to violence, which usually results in their death. After their death, the Dark Other haunts the narrative, and this is where fantasy stories usually end. Thomas suggests that there can be another



Angel Coulby who played Gwen in BBC's *Merlin* (2008-2012)

stage of this cycle where the Dark Other is liberated, but this stage is rarely achieved. This is because the Dark Other is viewed as unlikable, and readers and viewers fail to understand or sympathise with them. Furthermore, audiences and critics view the settings, circumstances, and resolutions of the emancipation of the Dark Others as unbelievable.

In each chapter, Thomas traces the development of these stages of the dark fantastic cycle in the narratives by focusing on one or two characters who represent the Dark Other in each story: Rue in *The Hunger Games*, Gwen in *Merlin*, Bonnie Bennett in *Vampire Diaries* and Angelina Johnson and Hermione Granger in *Harry Potter*. For example, Thomas notes that some fans of *The Hungers Games* book series were surprised that Rue was played by a mixed-race actress in the film adaptation despite the fact that Rue is described in the books as having dark eyes and brown skin. Thomas claims that the description of Rue's appearance combined with the harsher treatment of citizens in district eleven and her tragic end make explicit that she is "descended from the contemporary Black US population" (61). This begs the question, why did some readers assume that Rue was white? For Thomas, the answer is that Rue is the symbol of innocence in the novel and, historically,

innocent children in fantasy literature are typically blonde haired, blue eyed white children. Thomas claims that Rue's story arc and the fan responses of the readers and viewers show the continuation of the cycle of the dark fantastic. This is because some fans were, at first, hesitant to accept Rue as the innocent child as she is seen as a spectacle of the dark other rather than as the symbol of innocence (62). Then, as the audience begins to sympathise with Rue by seeing her through Katniss' eyes, which is problematic as Rue is relegated to the status of a secondary character, Rue is subjected to a violent death (62). The memory of Rue then haunts the rest of the narrative (62) in the subsequent books and films.

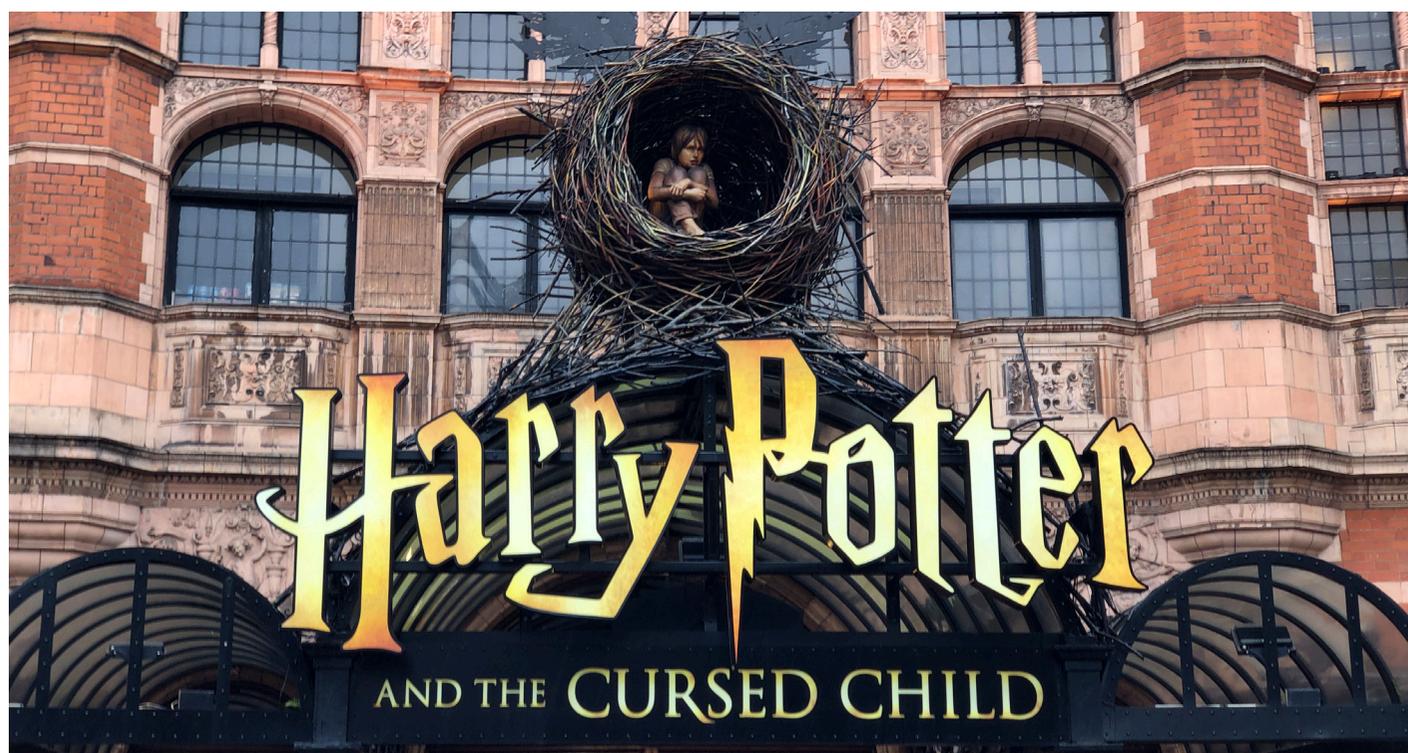
There were similar objections from some fans to Gwen, the future Queen of Camelot, being played by a mixed-race actress, as some fans claimed that the presence of a mixed-race person in England during this time is inaccurate. Thomas suggests that the reason these fans insist that there were not any people of colour living in England during this time is because they are relying on depictions of the early medieval period in Arthurian stories, which only show white people, rather than on demographics, which show that people of many cultures lived in England during this time. This

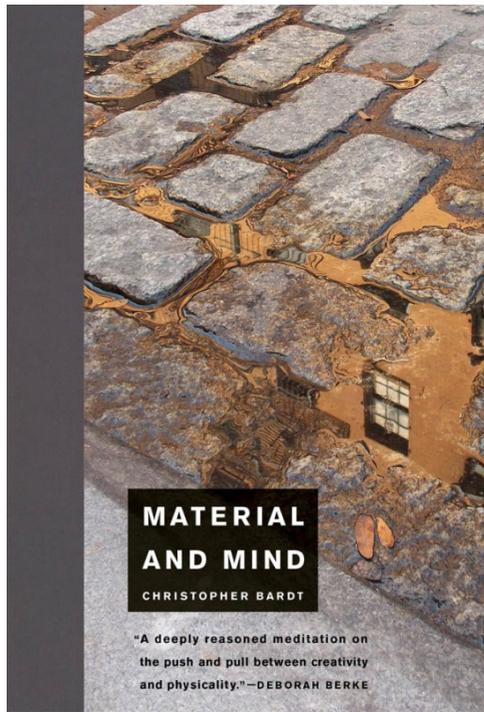
demonstrates the importance of storytelling on our collective consciousness and the problems caused by older fantasy narratives that exclude characters of colour. By showing in each chapter how the Dark Other is constructed in fantasy narratives written before the late twentieth and early twenty-first century, such as the Arthurian stories, and by demonstrating how these contemporary fantasy stories continue to use the trope of the Dark Other, Thomas makes us aware of the cycle of the dark fantastic in order for us to break it.

As well as discussing the racist reactions of some fans who objected to the casting of actresses of colour in these roles, Thomas includes the reactions of fans who embraced these casting choices and who have been positively influenced. She claims that many fans have written fan fictions continuing Gwen's story, have made fan art of her, and have cosplayed as her (106). This shows the importance of including characters of colour and the importance of casting actors of colour in fantasy stories. Although Thomas did not intend to discuss the ways that gender and race intersect in her book, she discovered that the majority of black protagonists in twenty-first century fantasy stories, not including comics, are female. Through critically analysing the stories of young, black female characters,

Thomas aligns herself with those working with the "Black Girls' Literacies Collective" (33) who research the ways these girls are treated in schools and in the media. This is because the way these literary characters are represented affects the real lives of young, black females, as demonstrated by the reactions of fans—both positive and negative—to Rue, Gwen, Bonnie, Angelina and Hermione.

*The Dark Fantastic* is an important text for authors, researchers and readers of fantasy fiction and related genres seeking to understand the problems with diversity in these stories. In order to make these genres more inclusive, authors and readers need to first understand how characters of colour were turned into the antagonistic monsters in earlier fantasy stories and how this trope persists today. Whilst the work of Black Fantastic and Afrofuturist authors and activists encourages diverse representation and storytelling, this is only half the solution. The other half of the solution is provided by Thomas. By reading Thomas' book, authors can learn how to break the cycle of the dark fantastic to ensure that everyone can read and watch fantasy stories and see themselves represented regardless of the age, gender, race or sexuality of the author.





**Review of *Material and Mind* by Christopher Bardt, The MIT Press. 2019. 373 pp.**

ELIN IVANSSON

*Material and Mind* is an ambitious interdisciplinary project in which Christopher Bardt, Professor of Architecture, examines the links between imagination, materials, and the mind. The fundamental question explored in his book is: “how are ideas, the imagination, and creativity influenced by and intertwined with physical material?” (5). Bardt argues that the influence that materials and our physical surroundings have on our minds has previously been underestimated or completely ignored. Thinking has been strongly connected with language, while the role of material has been confined to the representation of these preformed ideas. Bardt explains that ‘mind,’ as “the faculty of imagination” has been divorced from our physical senses, and that this does not account for how working with materials influences our imagination.

Bardt sets out to prove his thesis that “working with physical material generates thought, imagination, and creative insights” (22) by outlining a historical examination of this relationship. He draws on contemporary

as well as historical examples to explore themes across twelve chapters. This mixture of old and new demonstrates how the material world has been and continues to be deeply influential in creative moments and processes. Beginning at the advent of language and tools, he outlines the effects making has on thinking, remembering, and visualizing, and explores visual and conceptual metaphors— “we think through materials” (197). Bardt, then, moves via the renaissance’s invention of perspective through multiple examples of art works and architectural constructions where materials have influenced the design process. Finally, he concludes the book in our current time where materiality has taken a back seat to digital technology.

Andy Clark and David J. Chalmer’s concept of “The Extended Mind” (1998) and Francisco J. Varela, Eleanor Rosch, and Evan Thompson’s Enactive Mind-theory (1991) are foundational for Bardt’s project. These theories from the cognitive sciences emphasise how the mind does not function in isolation but in a process of exchange with the physical and material. Through these concepts, Bardt demonstrates how mind and matter are constantly intertwined in processes of remembering as well as designing. Whilst material is often discussed as something *acted* on, Bardt outlines how materials and media also have *resistance*, and it is this resistance that he argues “wakens the imagination” (189) and brings forward a conversation between mind and material. To support his thesis, Bardt presents a wide range of historical examples as well as personal anecdotes to demonstrate the many times, and ways, in which materials have had a say in design processes. As an example of the give and take relationship between mind and material, Bardt lists the car industry’s design process. Despite access to enhanced digital technology, car manufacturers still construct hand-sculpted clay models for new car designs. As Bardt writes, “both designers and modelers speak of the ‘soul’ and ‘transmission of emotion’ as key ingredients

of car design” that they cannot achieve with 3D software alone (15).

Bardt also analyses projects by various architects, for example the influence of ‘the hand’ on Ronchamp chapel by Charles-Édouard Jenneret (1887-1965). Although the finished chapel is not hand-shaped, Bardt takes us through the layers of the architect’s design process addressing the metaphorical and metaphysical bonds between the architect’s mind and hand. One of the buildings Bardt examines at length is Ludwig Mies van der Rohe’s Tugendhat House (Brno, Czech Republic, 1930). Bardt traces the impact of Mies’ charcoal sketches, and his use of thick lines for the top floor and thin lines for the bottom floor (212-13). Bardt views them as an example of how Mies “understood that thought emerges through media” (213). The most interesting part of Bardt’s analysis is “the onyx wall” (216-22). The stone wall transmits light and Bardt claims that “the wall is reduced to the purely elemental and, like fire, gives rise to material imagination” (219). He connects Mies’ onyx wall to the cave paintings of hunted animals that he discussed in chapter two as a “marked membrane [which] fuses subject with object” (39). Although Bardt is careful not to overextend this comparison, it is a thought provoking one that emphasises how, despite changing times, some material conditions and inspirations are solid, albeit partially transparent. He claims that these two walls “collapse distance—between human and animal worlds in the former, and between self and modernity in the latter” (222).

In the final chapters, Bardt explores the dangers of leaving embodied thinking behind in the adoption of new digital technologies and the need to “differentiate between resistance and stimulation” (335). Bardt argues that it is in the material resistance that creativity is sparked. Stimulation, however, is a passive state for both body and mind: “being stimulated is like following an instruction, which is not the same as acting on one’s own” (335). Bardt asks if we can “learn without the involvement of our hands and their participation in our physical

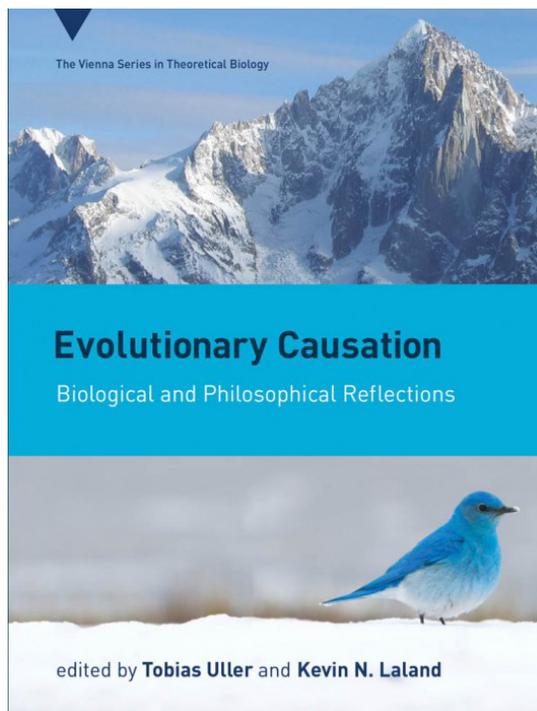
material and Umwelt?” (336). He reaches the conclusion that students of architecture need to learn by working with materials and their hands as well as with digital technology.

Bardt’s *Material and Mind* is an inspiring read that allows us to see the agency and potential in materials and the interactions we have with them. Bardt takes an interdisciplinary approach, drawing on, for example, archaeology, neuroscience, and philosophy as well as art history and poetry. He argues that “only such a broad [...] approach can reveal how material and mind interact through surrogates such as metaphor, representation projection, analogues, tools, and models.” (3-4). Bardt’s interdisciplinary approach paves the way for readers to explore this subject further in their own discipline, underlining the utility of this work across fields far beyond architecture and design.

This book is a love letter to the hands-on design process, but more than that, through emphasising the intertwined relationship between internal mind and external world it calls attention to how we are not only actants but are constantly acted upon and deeply influenced by the materials around us. In the context of our current climate crisis, Bardt’s book foregrounds the importance of thinking with and through our hands and bodies, and, perhaps, by extension, the earth.



Charles-Édouard Jenneret, Ronchamp chapel



**Review of *Evolutionary Causation: Biological and Philosophical Reflections* edited by Tobias Uller and Kevin N. Laland. MIT Press. 2019. 361 pp.**

JAG WILLIAMS

*Evolutionary Causation*, edited by evolutionary biologists Tobias Uller and Kevin Laland, is the most recent contribution within the “Vienna Series in Theoretical Biology”. This series “intends to help fill important gaps in our understanding of some of the major open questions of biology, such as the origin and organization of organismal form, the relationship between development and evolution, and the biological bases of cognition and mind” (vii). In this book, the contributors interrogate the concept of evolutionary causation from the perspective of the newly emergent research program in evolutionary biology called the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis (EES). The Extended Evolutionary Synthesis is a developing tradition within evolutionary biology that argues that evolutionary theories must go beyond gene-centered accounts of evolutionary causation by introducing concepts from evolutionary developmental biology and evolutionary ecology (such as niche construction) into the conceptual

frameworks and methodologies of population genetics.

In order to define a concept of evolutionary causation along these lines, Uller and Laland have assembled evolutionary biologists and philosophers of science who (broadly) identify with the tradition of Extended Evolutionary Synthesis to contribute to the fifteen chapters of the collection. These fifteen chapters are divided along three sections: (1) the first two chapters dealing with introduction and methodological remarks, (2) chapters three through eleven with biological reflections, and (3) chapters twelve through fifteen with philosophical reflections. In this book review, for the sake of both brevity and clarity, I will limit my discussion to the standout essays that specifically wrestle with the two primary contrasts between the Extended Evolutionary Systems and the gene-centered conceptualizations of evolutionary causation. Namely, I will isolate and explicate the two central theoretical issues in *Evolutionary Causation* which are 1) organismal agency and 2) the proximate-ultimate causal distinction. These two theoretical targets both implicitly and explicitly guide the discussions and arguments throughout the collected essays and demonstrate how the relevant conceptual debate on evolutionary causation between gene-centric and Extended Systems Synthesis accounts rests on these two issues.

Organismal agency refers to the ability of living organisms to modify their interactions with their environments in order to re-orient their experiences of the world to satisfy relevant metabolic needs and maintain living conditions. Importantly, as Laland, Odling-Smee, and Feldman write, these modified interactions and changes in experiences of the world “are neither *predetermined*, nor *random*” because they are directed by the ingenuity of organisms in their pursuit of metabolic needs (131). Moczek’s fourth chapter on *evo devo* and Laland, Odling-Smee, and Feldman’s seventh chapter on niche construction theory each articulate the evolutionary significance of

organismal agency. Moczek's developmental systems conceptualization of organismal agency emphasizes developmental plasticity (also known as phenotypic plasticity), which is an organism's ability to behaviorally respond to existing developmental constraints with innovative behavioral adaptations without requiring an initial genetic mutation to catalyze the novel behavior (i.e. new phenotypes). In this view of evolutionary adaptation, rather than just being caused by the selection of genes over long time-scales, adaptation can also be caused and directed by an organism's pre-existing self-organizing mechanisms which can re-wire behavioral patterns, stabilize successful behavioral variants, and bias future genetic and phenotypic adaptations towards a particular trajectory. Consequently, evolutionary adaptation does not require novel introductions of modules, pathways, or cell fates because developmental constraints and standing genetic variation can be overcome via organismal agency acting to innovate in response to developmental constraints. An organism has the ability to build new behaviors on an existing stable gene pool. Thus, rather than just being gene-centric, Moczek argues that *organisms as developmental systems* exercise organismal agency and this organismal agency is *evolutionary significant* because it can lead to innovative phenotypic variations without first requiring genetic mutation or natural

selection over long time-scales.

In their chapter, Laland, Odling-Smee, and Feldman identify the causal relevance of organismal agency for evolutionary causation by focusing on the concept of niche construction. Niche construction is "the process whereby organisms, through their metabolism, their activities, and their choices, modify their own and each other's niche", the niche being "the sum of all natural selection pressures to which the population is exposed" (129). The concept of niche construction has always been a relevant concept in evolutionary biology, even in gene-centric theories, as it is nearly impossible to tell a meaningful story about evolution without weaving together some account of fine-grained organism-environment interactions. Yet, gene-centric accounts of evolutionary causation do not typically count niche construction as a causally significant evolutionary process. The authors of this chapter define niche construction as an aspect of organismal agency that is evolutionarily causally significant because it acts as a force for instituting, reworking, and stabilizing novel phenotypes in a population. These novel introductions of phenotypes emerge from goal-driven and self-regulating organism-environment interactions that lead to "a statistical bias on the direction and mode of selection, and hence on the speed and direction of evolution" (142). One of the



clearest examples of niche construction in the animal kingdom (besides humans with our cultural structures) is the beaver who, via the creation of networks of dams in an environment, fundamentally alters and reshapes their individual fitness landscape as well as the fitness landscape of future generations. Beavers exercise organismal agency over their evolutionary trajectory via their propensity to enact physical changes in their environment. Thus, in their essay, Laland, Olding-Smee, and Feldman argue that niche construction is an *evolutionarily significant type* of organismal agency because it is the process by which organisms create physical and/or social structures and incorporate those structures into their behavioral patterns in a way that fundamentally alters their individual population's fitness as well as the fitness of future generations.

One of the objections levied against treating organismal agency as evolutionarily significant is that it conflates "proximate" and "ultimate" causes together; a distinction that originates in the work of 20th century biologist Ernst Mayr. Philosopher Karola Stotz's essay on the proximate-ultimate distinction quotes Mayr who writes, "It is evident that the functional biologist would be concerned with analysis of the proximate causes, while the evolutionary biologist would be concerned with analysis of ultimate causes" (333). Mayr is arguing here that proximate causes are essentially about *how* individual mechanisms and developmental systems work in whereas ultimate causes are about explanations of *why* those mechanisms emerged in the organism at all. Failures to recognize this distinction, according to advocates for gene-centric theories of evolutionary causation, have led to what contemporary gene-centered evolutionary biologists have called the "ontogenetic fallacy: explaining an evolutionary outcome through causes of development" (336). For this very reason, the proximate-ultimate distinction marks the second crucial theoretical issue governing the arguments within *Evolutionary Causation*.

In addition to the various other contributors in the collection who undermine what they see as the false dichotomy at play in Mayr's formulation (Duckworth (154) and Walsh (243)), Stotz argues that the proximate-ultimate distinction is unhelpful because ultimate explanations of evolutionary change *must* be grounded in relevant proximate mechanisms at some point in evolutionary history. That is, ultimate explanations of why certain developmental and/or biological systems operate the way they do must have a relevant causal story referring to proximate mechanisms at some point in the organism's history. As Stotz writes, "All of natural selection's underlying conditions -- trait variation, inheritance, and differential fitness -- can be given a causal-mechanistic account of proximate causes. It is only through their role in the selection process that they are rendered as ultimate causes" (334). Stotz is arguing that natural selection across generations of populations does not actually describe a *causal* force but a *statistical distribution* across a long timescale. Thus, the proximate-ultimate distinction does not genuinely define two *kinds of causation* because statistical distributions across time are not genuine *physical* forces. Rather than two kinds of causation, proximate mechanisms define how "individual populations change over time because of the way physical processes interact with particular organisms" while ultimate causes are really ultimate *explanations* that are "strictly speaking not a process or a cause but a statistical distribution" (335). With this proximate-ultimate distinction cashed out according to a difference between proximate physical mechanisms of causality and formalized statistical distributions, we can understand how the proximate-ultimate can be relevant for evolutionary biology without undermining the role of organismal agency in evolution. This is because, whether mechanisms of natural selection or organismal agency, causal forces of evolution depend on being instantiated in proximate mechanisms which can

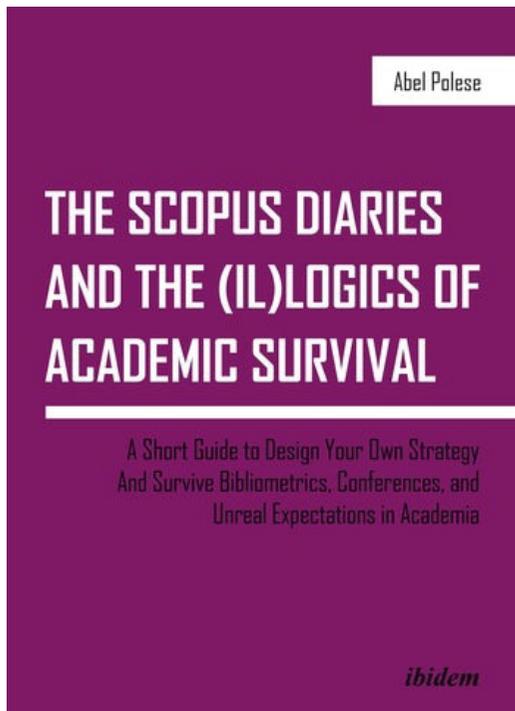


lead to formalized statistical distributions for ultimate explanations. The relevant argument, according to Stotz, just turns back to whether or not organismal agency genuinely indicates significant contributions to evolutionary adaptation; this question, however, relates to issues of organismal agency's significance in general and not its being a proximate mechanism. The central theoretical disputes to be waged, therefore, seem to rest on the role organismal agency in evolutionary directedness and whether or not the proximate-ultimate distinction excludes developmental bias from being evolutionarily significant.

Overall, the focus on the revision of traditional views of evolutionary causation in this book, while fascinating, may have been more precise if some of its contributors attended to more moderate evolutionary biologists and philosophers working in the area of causation. More specifically, I would have enjoyed more of a nuanced discussion of how Extended Evolutionary Synthesis conceptualizations of evolutionary causation fit in with more nuanced theories of evolution found in the works of neo-Darwinian evolutionary philosophers such as Daniel Dennett and Kim Sterelny who explicitly argue for the ubiquity of natural selection in adaptation, while also agreeing wholeheartedly with phenotypic plasticity

and genetic accommodation. The ability of Dennett and Sterelny to accept both a natural selection only view of evolutionary causation, while at the same time accepting developmental plasticity, niche construction, and genetic accommodation would seem to undermine the project of the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis to *radically revise* evolutionary causation. It is possible that Dennett and Sterelny are not entitled to their acceptance of both positions (natural selection only-causation and Extended Evolution Synthesis concepts) but, without the contributors explicit discussion of these more moderate philosophers, I am left without a convincing answer to whether or not I should accept the more moderate version of evolutionary causation found in Dennett and Sterelny or accept EES's more radical revision that supplements natural selection with other evolutionary processes of causation. Since accepting conservative revision is always a bit more safe than radical revision (particularly in science), *Evolutionary Causation's* lack of discussion about how their view measures against more nuanced versions of neo-Darwinianism is an unfortunate omission.

Despite this criticism, I strongly recommend *Evolutionary Causation* to anyone interested in the field of evolutionary biology and the philosophy of biology. The contributors to the collection have worked hard to insightfully and systematically indicate the chief breaking points between traditional gene-centric natural selection and the organismal agential accounts of evolution in the Extended Evolutionary Synthesis. *Evolutionary Causation* has shown that the theoretical competition between different accounts of evolutionary causation is to be waged on the grounds of organismal agency and the relevance of the proximate-ultimate distinction. I recommend this book to any experienced reader of evolutionary biology or the philosophy of biology if they are interested in contemporary issues in evolutionary biology.



## Surviving in Academia

**Review of *The SCOPUS Diaries and the (il)logics of Academic Survival* by Abel Polese. Ibidem Press. 2019. 230 pp.**

PROFESSOR HENRIQUE SCHNEIDER

In *The SCOPUS Diaries*, Abel Polese walks the reader through the key areas of academic life: writing abstracts and research pieces, publishing them, forming and establishing a profile, finding niches, building up standing as a scholar, networking, and getting funded. While he is meticulous in describing the actual state of academic work, he does not stop there. Polese also provides strategies and practical counsel for early-career scholars on how to adapt to this system, use it, and, sometimes, game it. While more seasoned researchers might value the author's diagnosis of academia, its real value is the practical help it offers in strategizing and scheming for junior scholars.

Independent from these general merits, what I personally liked most about Polese's monograph is his prose and style. The text is accessible and based on his personal experiences, which fill the pages with anecdotes and examples. Polese has a good sense of humor, especially in a self-critical

way. In this short review, I will highlight just two elements of the book: writing and "performing" in conferences.

Polese's chapter on writing is certainly the longest and perhaps the strongest of the book. He begins by asserting that there is much more to writing than putting a scholarly article together. He develops every step of this process paying special attention to contacting publishers, writing abstracts, and framing one's research. As a person that has edited multi-authored publications, organized conferences, and served as a peer-reviewer, I strongly agree with Polese's point. Early-stage scholars (but not only them) often put little or no effort into the surrounding aspects of submitting research pieces. This is a fundamental error. It matters which editor or organizer you contact; it matters how you contact them; and it matters how "editor-friendly" your submitted research is. Beyond these considerations, it matters for your professional career whether you wait a decade (!) to publish in an A-rated journal or use C-journals as dumping ground for every idea you have ever had. It matters if you aspire to present at "Olympic" conferences or if you attend smaller, regional meetings. Polese encourages his readers to think about what venues are most appropriate for their submissions. Do you want your finished research to shine? In this case, A-journals or glamorous conferences are the correct venues. Do you want to work on something that is promising but you still need input from peers? A workshop is the best place for that (and is often subsidized). Taking the time to think about what is best for an individual piece and what is best in the wider context of professional and career goals enables academics to get the most out of their research.

As well as addressing how to correctly place your work, Polese also offers insights into how to present your work in the first place. A central aspect of this is the abstract, which he suggests should follow the arrangement: research question, methodology, structure, finding, and

novelty. The more scholars use this form, Polese claims, the more their publications will be accepted, and the more readers and citations they will get. Let's face it – and the author is the first to do so: the abstract is often the only part of the article that is read. In this chapter, Polese also gives advice on how to react to peer-review, how to incorporate the reviewers' remarks, whether to try the same paper on a different journal or conference, and which publications or organizations to prioritize. I consider this chapter to be extremely helpful. For this reason, I made it a mandatory reading in the syllabus of the course "introduction to academic work and research methods", which is taught to all students in my university.

Academia, however, is not just about writing and publishing. It is also about things such as performing at conferences. Conferences are a place to shine and to network. Polese observes that many early career scholars waste their time at conferences, going to every talk or panel. According to him, it is more meaningful to attend select events in which more senior scholars participate. This strategy has a double objective: first, it makes it possible to learn from the leaders in the field, and

second, it is a meaningful way of beginning an exchange with them. This second goal relates to a more important point made by the author. Conferences are primarily a place to network. Polese repeatedly stresses the value of getting together, attending social events, looking up other people to talk to, and establishing a rapport with the editors in book exhibits. Of course, one of the most obviously important aspects of conference performance is actually presenting well. As Polese remarks, many very good papers are presented in a mediocre way, diminishing their value. Here too, Polese provides practical guidance about how to present – and how not to do it.

Overall, I recommend this book not only to early-stage scholars but also to more established academics. While I understand that the overt personalization and the occasional verbosity of the book might put some readers off, the diagnosis and especially the practical advice given in the monograph outweigh by far any stylistic caveats. For a further edition, I would recommend using checklists as a summary of the advice provides as well as deepening presentation techniques and networking skills, especially vis-à-vis editors.



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